

SOCIO-SPATIAL GEOGRAPHIES OF HISPANIC IMMIGRANT YOUTH  
ACCESSING THE URBAN LABOR MARKET

by

Johanna Claire Schuch

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of  
The University of North Carolina at Charlotte  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in  
Geography and Urban Regional Analysis

Charlotte

2016

Approved by

---

Dr. Heather Smith

---

Dr. Owen Furuseth

---

Dr. Qingfang Wang

---

Dr. Maren Coffman



## ABSTRACT

JOHANNA CLAIRE SCHUCH. Socio-spatial geographies of Hispanic immigrant youth accessing the urban labor market. (Under the direction of DR. HEATHER A. SMITH)

This study combines interviews, questionnaires, journaling, mental mapping, and a participatory action research (PAR) project to examine the lived experiences of Hispanic<sup>1</sup> immigrant youth as they navigate the labor market. Research questions address how youth are transitioning into the workforce in an age of labor insecurity, anti-immigrant sentiment and policy; what the challenges are; and how the youth propose to improve their job access. Attention is paid to how differences in documentation status, and other demographic and neighborhood variables, affect job access and how youth perceive their opportunities. Applying a mixed-methods, multi-scalar approach, this study captures how the personal and the local interconnect with the institutional at the local, state and national level.

How youth operationalize and deal with their documentation status on a day-to-day basis is spatially contingent. Lack of documentation status is a factor that intersects with but tends to override other personal, household, and neighborhood characteristics. DACA has profound benefits on undocumented participants' lives but it is not enough to secure their future. There is a lack of understanding about immigration policies and statuses by youth and their families, and employers, which can reduce job opportunities for non-citizen youth. Also, many Latino/a youth, regardless of their status, face

---

<sup>1</sup>In this study, the terms 'Hispanic' and 'Latino' are used interchangeably, because: a) this is oftentimes the case in research and government reports and publications; b) there is not a consensus among immigrants from Latin America about which should be used. Among my participants, there was generally no preference either, but youth seemed to use 'Latino/a' more frequently, so I started using it more often as well.

stereotyping and discrimination at work, school, or in public spaces, based on their ethnicity. This impacts their work access, confidence, and aspirations.

Family expectations and support are key in motivating and encouraging youth to work hard and achieve their dreams. Youth are also able to leverage their bilingualism, biculturalism, and "immigrant" determination in professional situations. In the face of challenges, youth present agency and resilience. The PAR project and avenues for change offered by youth support the idea that youth themselves know best how to improve their labor market opportunities, and they should be involved in the creation and implementation of these initiatives.

Lastly, this study furthers our discussion about immigrant integration and segmented assimilation, and demonstrates how Hispanic youth experience socio-spatial labor market inclusion and exclusion.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I would like to express my utmost gratitude to my youth participants. This dissertation would not be possible without their honest insights and unique contributions. Thank you for trusting me and sharing your stories. A special thank you to the Latin American Coalition and their youth coordinators for their partnership. Second, I am grateful to my dissertation committee members for providing constructive feedback on my drafts. In particular, I thank Dr. Heather Smith, my advisor and dissertation chair, for all her support and feedback on my dissertation, from its inception all throughout to the final version. This project would not have come together without her advice and mentorship. Third, I wish to acknowledge the generous financial assistance I received from the National Science Foundation (NSF), the International Society of Women Geographers (SWG), and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte's Chancellor's Diversity fund. Thanks to these contributions, I was able to execute this project to its fullest extent. Fourth, I am grateful for all the friends, family, and colleagues who have offered encouragements along the doctoral road, especially my partner for his tremendous support throughout my PhD journey. Even though the dissertation is an independent research endeavor, its completion and success is contingent upon the various forms of assistance from others.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	xiv
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	14
2.1    Assimilation, Integration, Incorporation (and their Variants)	14
2.2    Socio-spatial Inclusion and Exclusion	29
2.3    Labor Market Segregation and Place/Space	32
2.4    Skills and Spatial Mismatch	38
2.5    Social Capital and Ethnic Networks	42
2.6    Children of Immigrants	47
2.7    Undocumented Youth	57
CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS	70
3.1    Case Study Approach	70
3.2    Multi-Scalar Perspective	76
3.3    Target Population	78
3.4    Descriptive Quantitative Data	81
3.5    Mixed Qualitative Methods	83
3.5.1    Questionnaires	89
3.5.2    Interviews	91
3.5.3    Participatory Action Research Project	98
3.5.4    Journaling and Mental Mapping	106
3.5.5    Field Notes and Observations	110

3.6	Recruitment, Locations, and Costs	112
CHAPTER 4: THE SOCIAL CONTEXT AND INFLUENCES OF YOUTH LABOR MARKET EXPERIENCES		115
4.1	Labor Market Characteristics of Hispanic Youth: A Metropolitan Sample	116
4.2	Labor Market Characteristics of Hispanic Youth: The Study Sample	122
4.3	Millennials Coming of Age	129
4.4	Socio-spatial Inclusion	137
4.4.1	Having a Social Security Number/Importance of DACA	139
4.4.2	Bilingualism	142
4.4.3	Biculturalism	149
4.4.4	Personality and Character Traits	155
4.4.5	Family Motivations	158
4.5	Lack of (Permanent) Legal Status	160
4.6	Discrimination and Stereotypes	172
4.7	Family	189
4.7.1	Lack of Resources, Support, and Information	192
4.7.2	Restricted Job Networks	195
4.8	Higher Education	197
4.9	Personal Characteristics	201
4.9.1	Household Income/SES	201
4.9.2.	Gender	206
4.9.3	Age	211
CHAPTER 5: SPATIAL DIMENTIONS OF YOUTH LABOR MARKET EXPERIENCE		213

5.1	Participants' Neighborhoods	213
5.2	Transportation	229
5.3	Segregation in Schools	231
CHAPTER 6: SOCIO-SPATIAL INCLUSION, EXCLUSION, AND STRATEGIC PRACTICES		238
6.1	Socio-spatial Inclusion/Exclusion	238
6.2	Socio-spatial Strategies used by Youth to Improve Job Opportunities	250
6.2.1	Finding Jobs via Friends, Family, and the Internet	254
6.2.2	Seeking, Leveraging Institutional Resources and Connections	261
6.2.3	Working while Undocumented: "Connections are Everything"	264
6.2.4	Advertising/Mentioning Bilingualism	266
6.2.5	Working Close to Home, Carpooling, Applying in Certain Areas	267
6.2.6	Youth Activism	270
6.2.7	Pursuing Higher Education	273
6.2.8	Connecting Currently Learning to Future Careers	279
6.2.9	Surrounding Oneself with Positive, Like-minded People	280
6.2.10	Dealing with Discrimination and Stereotypes	281
6.3	Further Discussion and Reflection	291
CHAPTER 7: OUTCOMES AND IMPLICATIONS OF POTENTIALLY DIVERGENT PATHWAYS		296
7.1	Is Segmented Assimilation Occurring?	297
7.2	Causal Mechanisms of Divergent Pathways	307
7.2.1.	Not Everyone has the Same Opportunities (Structure)	307



7.2.2.	Personal Choice (Agency)	312
7.3	(Possible) Outcomes of Divergent Trajectories	316
7.3.1	Economic and Health Disparities	316
7.3.2	Limited Options, Lost Potential	317
7.3.3	Crushed Dreams	323
7.3.4	Emerging Leaders	324
7.4	Implications of Divergent Paths	324
7.4.1	(Not) Living the ‘American Dream’	324
7.4.2	Societal Consequences	326
7.5	Further Discussion and Reflection	327
CHAPTER 8: THE PAR PROJECT: “NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US”		335
8.1	Designing the Study	338
8.2	Identifying a Community Partner	340
8.3	Resources and Compensation	340
8.4	Planning, Executing, and Evaluating the Sessions	342
8.4.1	Preparations	342
8.4.2	Developing Trust	343
8.4.3	Designing the Project	346
8.4.4	Executing the Project	351
8.4.5	Evaluating the Process and Outcomes	361
8.5	Outcomes and Sustainability	365
8.6	Disseminating Findings	366
8.7	Challenges	367

8.8	Rewards	371
CHAPTER 9: HOW YOUTH PROPOSE TO IMPROVE JOB ACCESS		377
9.1.	Programs	378
9.2.	Policies	387
9.3.	Other Suggestions	395
9.4.	Making Change Happen	405
CHAPTER 10: CHARLOTTE/"NEW SOUTH" CONTEXT		414
10.1	What is the "New South"?	414
10.2	The Myth of the New South	418
10.3	How the Myth of the New South and Geographic/Regional Context come into Play in this Dissertation: Receptivity and Inter-group Relations	423
CHAPTER 11: CONCLUSIONS, CONTRIBUTIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH		436
11.1	Summary of Findings	436
11.2	Contributions to Literature and Knowledge	443
11.2.1	Literature on Immigrant Youth	443
11.2.2	Labor Market Theory	445
11.2.3	Segmented Assimilation Theory	447
11.2.4	The Discipline of Geography	449
11.2.5	The Subfield of Urban and Regional Analysis	451
11.2.6	Participatory Action Research	452
11.2.7	Doctoral Research	453
11.2.8	Other	454
11.3	Future Paths for Investigation	455

BIBLIOGRAPHY	458
APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT FLYERS (ENGLISH AND SPANISH)	477
APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORMS (ENGLISH AND SPANISH)	479
APPENDIX C: ASSENT FORM FOR MINORS	487
APPENDIX D: LETTER FROM COMMUNITY PARTNER	489
APPENDIX E: MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN COMMUNITY PARTNER AND RESEARCHER	490
APPENDIX F: QUESTIONNAIRE	491
APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW GUIDE	495
APPENDIX H: LETTER TO INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS + LIST OF RESOURCES	497
APPENDIX I: WORD CLOUD OF MOST FREQUENTLY USED WORDS IN THE TRANSCRIPTS	500
APPENDIX J: PAR INFORMATION HANDOUT	501
APPENDIX K: JOURNALING AND MENTAL MAPPING RESEARCH EXERCISE HAND-OUT	503
APPENDIX L: AGENDA FIRST PAR MEETING – JAN 14, 2015	505
APPENDIX M: AGENDA SECOND PAR MEETING - JAN 21, 2015	506
APPENDIX N: AGENDA THIRD PAR MEETING - JAN 28, 2015	507
APPENDIX O: AGENDA FORTH PAR MEETING – FEB. 4, 2015	509
APPENDIX P: AGENDA FIFTH PAR MEETING – FEB 11, 2015	510
APPENDIX Q: AGENDA SIXTH PAR MEETING– FEB 25, 2015	511
APPENDIX R: AGENDA SEVENTH PAR MEETING – MARCH 4, 2015	513
APPENDIX S: AGENDA EIGHTH PAR MEETING – MARCH 18, 2015	514

APPENDIX T: AGENDA NINTH PAR MEETING – MARCH 25, 2015	515
APPENDIX U: CODING SESSION – MARCH 25, 2015	516
APPENDIX V: AGENDA TENTH PAR MEETING – APRIL 1, 2015	519
APPENDIX W: AGENDA YOUTH PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SEMINAR – APRIL 7, 2015	520
APPENDIX X: AGENDA FINAL PAR MEETING – APRIL 15, 2015	521
APPENDIX Y: HANDOUT FOR PAR PARTICIPANTS: HOW TO TALK ABOUT THIS PROJECT AND YOUR INVOLVEMENT	522
APPENDIX Z: DISCLOSURE STATEMENT	525
APPENDIX AA: EVALUATING THE PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH (PAR) PROCESS WITH CO-RESEARCHERS – SURVEY AND GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE	526
APPENDIX BB: COMMUNITY PRESENTATION POSTERS	528

## LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1: Parents and family background of study participants	96
TABLE 2: Results for Charlotte-Gastonia-Rock Hill metropolitan area (2011 ACS 5-year, 2011 ACS 3-year and 2012 ACS 3-year data combined)	116
TABLE 3: Youth occupations	124
TABLE 4: Contributors to socio-spatial labor market inclusion and exclusion	137
TABLE 5: Neighborhood data for participants' NSAs compared to the county average (1/2)	216
TABLE 6: Neighborhood data for participants' NSAs compared to the county average (2/2)	217
TABLE 7: 2012 NSA data	219
TABLE 8: Methods of finding jobs for youth in the US	253
TABLE 9: Pearson's correlations between demographic and job-seeking variables	254
TABLE 10: Segmented assimilation model	297
TABLE 11: Proportion of Latinos and non-residents enrolled in North Carolina community colleges (N=38)	322
TABLE 12: Participant feedback	362
TABLE 13: Overview of ideas for change and their operationalization based on youth suggestions	411

## LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: Typology of Modes of Incorporation	18
FIGURE 2: A latent variable model of downward assimilation	21
FIGURE 3: An overview of theoretical perspectives on assimilation	23
FIGURE 4: Defining social-spatial exclusion/inclusion	30
FIGURE 5: Estimates of the US Unauthorized Immigrant Population, 2000-2011 (in millions)	59
FIGURE 6: Percent Hispanic/Latino of the total population by census tract, Mecklenburg County	73
FIGURE 7: CMS Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity by Academic Year, 1987-2010	74
FIGURE 8: Multi-scalar Conceptual Framework of Influences on Labor Market	77
FIGURE 9: Overview of Research Questions, Methods, and Analysis	83
FIGURE 10: Background information about the study participants	94
FIGURE 11: Participants' and their parents' countries of birth	95
FIGURE 12: Participants' parental educational attainment	97
FIGURE 13: English proficiency among participants' parents	98
FIGURE 14: Age distribution Hispanic foreign-born youth	119
FIGURE 15: Age distribution Hispanic US-born youth	119
FIGURE 16: Years in the US, foreign-born Hispanic youth	120
FIGURE 17: Poverty status for US-born vs. foreign-born Hispanic youth	121
FIGURE 18: Countries of origin for foreign-born youth 16-21 in Charlotte- Gastonia-Rock Hill metro area	122
FIGURE 19: Employed persons 16-24 years of age, July 2014-2015	126
FIGURE 20: Percent growth of Hispanic Millennials projected 2014-2019	134

FIGURE 21: Questionnaire responses, factors influencing youth job opportunities	138
FIGURE 22: The cultural iceberg model, portraying external and internal culture	152
FIGURE 23: Proposed North Carolina driver's license for DACA recipients	168
FIGURE 24: Current North Carolina driver's license for DACA recipients	169
FIGURE 25: Mental map, example 1	191
FIGURE 26: Mental map, example 2	191
FIGURE 27: Median household income by NSA, with participants' NSAs highlighted	214
FIGURE 28: Map showing the percent Hispanic by NSA, with participants' NSAs highlighted	215
FIGURE 29: Participants describe their neighborhood (verbatim quotes)	221
FIGURE 30: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) with the highest percentages of Hispanic student and high schools attended by participants	234
FIGURE 31: Two- and four-year institutions attended by participants	237
FIGURE 32: DACA applications and renewals by quarter, Aug. 2012-Dec. 2014	242
FIGURE 33: Where/how participants are most likely to search for jobs	252
FIGURE 34: Education through the eyes of youth	277
FIGURE 35: Simplified diagram of divergent pathways	312
FIGURE 36: Youth ADAPT NC logo	351
FIGURE 37: PAR participants' survey results	361

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Ana<sup>2</sup> is a 19-year old Latina living in Charlotte, North Carolina. She migrated with her parents to the United States when she was 6 years old, directly from Mexico, her country of birth. She lives with her younger brother and parents in the suburbs. Her parents have little formal education and speak basic English. Ana graduated from a public high school and her dream is to become a teacher. She speaks passionately about educating children, even though the road to becoming a teacher is hard. At the time of the interview, she worked as a cashier at a Japanese restaurant and was taking classes at a community college. At work, Ana uses her Spanish to communicate with Spanish-speaking customers and interpret between her English-speaking employers and Spanish-speaking kitchen staff. School and work are close to each other, in downtown Charlotte. To get home, she depends on limited bus connections and rides from friends and family. Paying for school is difficult, but Ana is determined to get an education: “I’ve always had this dream of going to school and I’ve gotten this far, I can’t stop now. It helps being around people that are supportive and know that I’ll be able to make it.”

Ana is undocumented but received a two-year visa in 2013 via the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA),<sup>3</sup> permitting her to work and study. However, the

---

<sup>2</sup> Pseudonym

<sup>3</sup> “On June 15, 2012, the Secretary of Homeland Security announced that certain people who came to the United States as children [before turning 16] and meet several guidelines may request consideration of deferred action for a period of two years, subject to renewal. They are also eligible for work authorization. Deferred action is a use of prosecutorial discretion to defer removal action against an individual for a certain period of time. Deferred action does not provide lawful status.” Eligibility criteria include being



process of renewing her DACA took so long that she fell out of status. Consequently, she had to stop working and was no longer able to pay for community college courses. She is bright, caring and incredibly determined, yet her future is marked with uncertainties. Even when she receives her DACA renewal, she does not know if she can stay in the US and pursue her dreams, even though the US is all she knows. Ana is not alone. There are over 11 million undocumented residents in the US and millions more in mixed-status families. Ana's documented peers do not have to worry about not having a social security number, but they face similar struggles in other aspects. This dissertation captures the lived experiences of Hispanic immigrant youth as they come of age and transition into the work force.

The objectives of this dissertation are to:

- 1) Add to the literature on segmented assimilation, labor market segmentation and space, social capital and networks, and social/spatial inclusion/exclusion (theoretical);
- 2) Contribute to our understanding of the everyday lived experiences of the children of immigrants, specifically how Latino immigrant youth access work in the context of state and national structures, but also more narrowly within a "New South" emerging gateway city (conceptual);
- 3) Employ progressive methodological approaches and analytical tools to learn about, involve, and empower an understudied and marginalized population

---

under the age of 31 as of June 15, 2012; having continuously resided in the United States since June 15, 2007, up to the present time; and being currently in school or having a GED.  
 Source: USCIS. Last updated on Sept. 3, 2015. Last accessed Jan. 15, 2016:  
<http://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/consideration-deferred-action-childhood-arrivals-daca>.

progressive methodological approaches and analytical tools to not only gain information about but also involve and give voice to an understudied and difficult-to-access population (methodological);

- 4) Suggest programs and policies that can improve access to employment for immigrant youth (public policy).

Hispanic youth are entering the US labor market in increasing numbers. Their experiences and outcomes can teach us about the degree to which migrants are successfully integrating into US society. However, “[t]he greatest hurdle for children of immigrants [...] seems to be to get a foothold into the labor market” (Liebig and Schröder, 2010, p. 11). Studies show it is particularly challenging for non-White youth in low-income families with parents with low education. Growing anti-immigrant sentiments and policies can further create disadvantages for Hispanic immigrant children, for instance in the form of prejudice or reduced access to education and jobs. Increased attention on their labor market integration shows concerns about lower employment outcomes but we know relatively little about immigrant youth and their experiences, especially in new immigrant destinations. There are clear hiring limitations without a social security number but not much is known about how undocumented youth access work and how DACA has changed their (perceived) trajectories. There is substantial research about immigrant youth educational outcomes, but much less about their work experiences and how factors such as documentation status, educational attainment, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and neighborhood of residents interact and shape the social and spatial strategies youth employ to enhance their labor market opportunities. Based on these gap, this study asks:

What does the process into the labor market look like for 1.5-generation Hispanic immigrant youth?

Specifically, I ask:

- a) What socio-spatial strategies do Hispanic youth use to access and navigate the labor market?
- b) What are the outcomes and implications of potentially divergent pathways?
- c) How do Hispanic youth propose to fix any issues and improve job access?

Three main questions follow the overarching inquiry. My first question (a) explores the social and geographic context of youth labor market access and how this impacts the youth job search and perspectives of their opportunity. Youth were asked where they are employed, how they seek employment (e.g. employing school, family, ethnic, or professional networks), and how they get to work or job interviews. Participants mapped where they (search for) work, how they travel between home and work, and where they seek resources (e.g. family, school, friends, and community organizations) to help them find employment. I consider how residential location matters when youth search for jobs and if this differs between documented and undocumented youth.

The second question (b) deals with the implications of potentially divergent labor market outcomes among Hispanic immigrant youth based on their strategies and particularly as we compare those who are documented with those who are undocumented. Influences of local factors as well as state-level and national-level factors are taken into account, and the consequences of the labor market outcomes for the youth themselves as well as broader society are considered. The third question (c) follows by asking participants how they would improve labor market access for themselves and their peers. As

outlined in my methodology, I explore these questions through engaging Hispanic immigrant youth in interviews and a participatory action research project. Their perceptions are central to this project.

Immigrant youth include those who are documented as well as undocumented. Being undocumented creates many barriers such as not being able to apply for most jobs, paying out-of-state tuition at universities,<sup>4</sup> and not being able to obtain a driver's license.<sup>4</sup> These barriers significantly constrict an individual's social and spatial mobility. Their family members may have the same documentation status or a different one, which adds an additional layer of complication that US-born children of US-born parents do not face. The growing number of immigrant and second generation youth in the US means their physical, socio-emotional, and economic well-being will increasingly be brought to our attention. This particular topic is of great significance as the prospects for these youth will be considerably shaped by their employment opportunities and early experiences in the labor market. It is important that we inform ourselves about the challenges they may face so we can identify policies and programs that will diminish these challenges. Improving opportunities for immigrant youth benefits not only them but the US society's social and economic development as a whole.

This study includes youth of different statuses. Thereby, the documented youth act as a compare group for the undocumented youth. The socio-spatial experiences with the local labor market may look similar because of similar (economic, mixed-status family, immigrant) backgrounds but are also different based on documentation status. Yet, we

---

<sup>4</sup> This is not the case in all states but it is the case in North Carolina, the setting for this study.

know little about how experiences between documented and undocumented youth are different and the impact of those differences. Access is both geographic (or spatial) and social. The social experiences can relate to how youth feel they are treated when applying for jobs and the spatial component can refer to where they are working (in relation to where they live). The socio-spatial combines when referring to, say, the type and geographic reach of the networks youth use to seek out employment. For instance, not having a social security number acts as a barrier to obtaining a driver's license. Without a license and access to a car, an individual's spatial mobility is limited in many places in the US, including Charlotte, and youth are forced to adapt by relying on friends and family and public transit (if it exists in their place of residence). As Jessop and colleagues further explain:

“[S]ocial relations exist as they have spatial existence, and get materialized through the production of space (Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 1996). (...) Similarly, Ethington (1997) affirms that geometric distance may influence or even produce social distance. Socio-spatial practices of distance may be essential influences on constructed identities of race, class, ethnicity, gender and the like (ibid.). Therefore, one can see that the issue of integration has been always mediated by distances, which are crucial parts of the structures that shape social relationships” (Jessop et al, 2008, p. 399).

Looking at the broader picture, I ask if social and spatial strategies navigating jobs are different for documented vs. undocumented students, what does this mean for these individuals and the local and regional economy? What does this say about our socio-institutional structures? By examining the spatial and social strategies of Hispanic immigrant youth entering the urban labor market, I highlight what their challenges and opportunities are, and identify ways to facilitate their school-work transition.

In addition to documentation status, I compared youth by their education, gender, neighborhood, and age, since there is evidence suggesting these factors play an important

role in employment access. Education includes attainment level but also the quality and context of that education. For instance, studies have demonstrated that a helpful school guidance counselor or teacher can influence whether or not a Hispanic immigrant youth goes to college (Gonzales, 2008). Gender may play a role in the sense that (young Hispanic) men and women may apply for jobs in different fields and their role in their family may be different, which affects job access and navigating strategies. If being undocumented makes it more likely for an individual to live in a certain neighborhood, for instance, this may further limit their access to work. Neighborhood of residence often tells us about the financial, educational, transportation, and professional networks and resources individuals have access to. Finally, since my age cohort captures an age category in which a lot of personal and professional changes are likely to occur, I compare the younger participants to the individuals on the upper end of the cohort to investigate notable differences in their social and spatial relationships with and perceptions on work.

I specifically focus on Hispanics because they make up the majority of the immigrant population in the US and in Charlotte. Studies have compared generations of Hispanic immigrants enough for us to know that generations are assimilating differently. However, the trajectories of youth who technically fall between first and second generation are not often considered. In many ways, they are fully ‘American’; they grew up here for most of their lives, they went to school here, they speak English, and they consider the US (rather than their parents’ country of origin) ‘home’. However, they may not be citizens or have legal resident status because they were born abroad.

This study highlights the spectrum of statuses among immigrant youth and their

families, and how the impacts of immigration policy and legislation are felt in people's everyday lives. Though documentation status is often thought of as a dichotomy (legal/illegal), there are in reality a variety of statuses one may have, including: US citizen; lawful permanent resident (LPR)/green card holder; asylee; refugee; battered spouse, child, or parent; temporary protected status (TPS); Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA); and lawful temporary resident (with a work or student visa).<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, one's status can change over time and immigrants may find themselves 'in between' statuses as their application for status change is pending. The individuals brought to the US by their parents are identified by Rumbaut (1997, 2004) as the "1.75 generation" (those who arrive in early childhood, ages 0-5), the "1.5 generation" (those who arrive in middle childhood, ages 6-12), and the "1.25 generation" (those who arrive in their adolescent years, ages 13-17). In 1998-2002, "of the approximately 30 million foreign born (excluding Puerto Ricans and other U.S. islanders), an estimated 18 million (60%) arrived as adults and another 12 million (40%) as children under 18" (Rumbaut, 2004, p. 1181). This is even higher for immigrants from Latin American and the Caribbean, and for immigrants coming from Mexico, almost half were under 18. In terms of research, the 1.5 and 1.75 generations are understudied because they fall within the first generation (their parents) and the second generation (children of immigrants born in the US). I believe that shedding light on their socio-spatial practices and identifying their struggles and opportunities can help us see into the future as more immigrant children are becoming of age in US society. My study therefore adds to a body of literature providing

---

<sup>5</sup> See, for instance, the US government site <https://www.healthcare.gov/immigration-status-and-the-marketplace/>, which provides an overview of statuses that qualify for Marketplace coverage.

insights into the long-term consequences of immigration for American society.

This topic deserves our attention because “[w]ithout broader means to obtain a postsecondary education and legally participate in adult life, these young men and women are a vulnerable population at risk for poverty and hardship. However, if given opportunities to pursue higher education and work legally in this country, these bilingual, bicultural students would benefit U.S. taxpayers and the economy overall” (Abrego and Gonzalez, 2010, p.144) . I focus specifically on the labor market because only if immigrant youth are able to transfer their education, skills, and potential into a job with a fair and stable wage can they become ‘productive’ members of society, sustain and develop themselves, and provide for their (future) families. The transitional phase into the labor market is an important one because it will set the trend for the next 40+ years of their life. By representing a critical juncture, this phase presents an opportunity for intervention but also high costs if issues are not addressed. Though my focus is the labor market rather than education, I understand that the two are intrinsically linked; therefore, education is discussed as I look at youth of different educational levels. There may be a point at which education level becomes a trajectory-changing factor that overrides other variables.

Findings speak to how the experiences of undocumented youth may vary across neighborhoods; how access to driver’s licenses and resources impact the day-to-day lives of undocumented youth; how restrictive immigration and education policies, an inability to obtain state-issued identification, and growing levels of anti-immigrant sentiment and demonstrations hinder these students’ life/work chances and socio-spatial mobilities. On a broader level, I ask how institutional structures (policies, regulations, political and



organizational hierarchies) and socio-cultural notions (stereotypes, discrimination, hegemonic discourse) create systems and spaces of inclusion and exclusion, and how this manifested at the local level. We see a paradox of increasing fluidity of the movement of people, goods, services, and capital but simultaneously the increasing rigidity of national security, border control, and what it means to 'be American' or to be a citizen of a certain country and all the privileges encompassed in this status.

Theoretically, I bring together literature on segmented assimilation, labor market segregation and space, skills and spatial mismatch, and socio-spatial structures of inclusion/exclusion. I find that these topics have been discussed considerably but that there is very little work on their intersections, for instance how undocumented immigrant youth are part of the (ethnic) labor market and how their neighborhood, skills set, social networks, and other factors influence their work outcomes. This is a gap that should be addressed. I investigate whether traditional theories about these topics, including segmented assimilation and spatial or skills mismatch, which were originally formulated for immigrant or African American adults, hold for Hispanic immigrant youth. I also ask how documentation status impacts whether labor market and immigration theories are confirmed or challenged.

We tend to believe that pursuing higher education will lead to improved labor market outcomes and upward socioeconomic mobility. Indeed, people with higher educational attainment generally have higher wages and lower unemployment rates. However, in the case of undocumented youth their US high school, college, or graduate degrees may not translate into improved labor market outcomes because they lack a social security number. These youth may be linguistically and culturally assimilated or

integrated into US society but if this does not pay off or translate into economic assimilation, they will continue to be part of the lower socio-economic class or even 'underclass'. The effects are compounding in that they not only impact the trajectory of this youth group but also that of their children, and sometimes also for their parents to whom they may act as interpreters and bread winners. Thus, much depends on the success of this generation.

Many existing studies focus predominantly on access to education. Labor market access is mentioned but not in detail; therefore, there is a need to centralize this topic. Though this study is unable to track trajectories longitudinally, current conditions and youth perceptions about their future job prospects can provide insight into what will happen in the long run to them, and the younger non-citizen children that follow them. Accordingly, this dissertation can shine light on the reasons behind divergent pathways and has the potential to predict further exclusion for children of immigrants if we fail to make the necessary policy and community-based changes. Still, we cannot make assumptions about the details of being undocumented. We know that it presents a barrier to work and other opportunities but there is still not much research on how this is experienced, navigated, and - in some cases - overcome at the local level. I also see the need for using a multi-scalar conceptual framework that accounts for the impact economic and policy structures have on immigrant youth labor market access, but that also acknowledges the influences of individual agency and local-level factors. Since many immigrant children are now in school, it is essential we think about their transition into the labor force now so that we can prepare for their entrance into the labor force.

Methodologically, I aim to further the development of mixed-methods in geographic studies. The most commonly used example in mixed-methods research in human geography is qualitative GIS (DeLyser and Sui, 2013a, 2013b; Jung and Elwood, 2010; Sheppard, 2001; Yeager and Steiger, 2013). In this case, I visualize information obtained in interviews and neighborhood Census data using Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Still, the analytical emphasis lies on a combination of qualitative and interpretive methods. Beyond core oral, textual, and observational methods, the use of diaries, visual methods (video, photographs), bodies, and participatory, audio, and action-based techniques are evolving as ways to use multiple senses, look beyond the surface of what is happening, and provide a deeper insight into people's experiences (e.g. McIntyre, 2003; McMorran, 2012; Oldrup and Carstensen, 2012; Rose, 2008; Wang, 1999). Also, the application of Participatory Action Research (PAR) allowed youth to create and execute their own project as part of this dissertation, to voice their opinions, and learn more about this topic and how to do research. Video recording the PAR group sessions provided additional insight into the PAR process. Issues of confidentiality are addressed in the methodology section.

Entry into the labor market is one of the three transitional stages in a person's life identified by the OECD (2010) as a potential point at which policy can be applied to influence outcomes. In other words, when attempting to improve socioeconomic outcomes for individuals and society as a whole, policies that address access to the labor market have the potential to make significant contributions. I hope this study helps guide the directions and details of further immigration policy (immigration reform, the DREAM Act, Deferred Action, e.g.) at the national and state level. Finding ways to provide legal status

to these youth is pivotal in securing better educational and labor market outcomes and overall well-being. That said, if these institutional changes fail to pass (in the near future), we must ask the difficult question of what else can be done for this generation. Even if immigration reform passes in the near future, it will take a while before the policies are enacted and the government can process all the applications for legalization. Continuing their lives as undocumented adults in America will remain challenging so we must consider other ways to alleviate this stress or prevent 'downward assimilation', for example via programs at the local level. Though I understand the vital importance of policy in the case of immigration and documentation status, the impacts of policy are not the central focus of this dissertation. Rather, I consider the current state and national policies as a set of every-changing structures that interacts with immigrant youths' lives.

This study builds on previous social science work on immigrant youth but expands it to add a spatial/geographic perspective and focuses on a previously understudied region of the US. Using mixed-methods, I contribute to our understanding of immigrant youth and the socio-spatial practices they employ to navigate their career opportunities. This in-depth case study provides insights into the Charlotte area but I devised it in a way that the findings can be transferable to other parts of the country, specifically other emerging immigrant gateway cities.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

As prefaced in the introduction, this study draws upon various themes and theories in the literature regarding immigrant trajectories, youth experiences, place and the labor market. In this chapter, I review relevant works on these topics, providing a context that informs the current study.

### 2.1 Assimilation, Integration, Incorporation (and their Variants)

The terms assimilation and integration have been used – and criticized – in a variety of academic and public discourses. The term assimilation was more commonly used in the US context, whereas integration and multiculturalism were more common in the European context. Currently, the term ‘integration’ is more acceptable because it refers to the process of immigrants to some extent adapting to the host society and to some extent influencing the host society by the different cultures and languages they bring. What kinds of ‘American’ values and influences immigrants take on depends on the area they settle in and the social groups they are surrounded by. Integration consists of various dimensions e.g. residential, political, cultural, and economic. Forms of structural integration into the labor and housing markets, as well as language and education – are considered more fundamental cultural or moral (value)-based integration (Gordon, 1964). For the purposes of this study, I am mainly concerned with structural, labor market integration and the ability for Hispanic immigrant youth to obtain work at the same levels and in the same work places as their US-born White youth (often used as the baseline comparison group). When referring to “full integration,” I recognize the different dimensions in

which integration occurs, as well as acceptance into society as contributors to society with equal rights.

Assimilation and segmented assimilation are theoretical frameworks for understanding the process in which the children of immigrants become incorporated into the system of stratification in the receiving country (Zhou, 1997b). Assimilation theory is traceable to early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Chicago School thought. In 1924, Park and Burgess (p.735) defined assimilation as “a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons and groups and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life.” The notion was that assimilation is the inevitable and desired end stage of “contact, competition, accommodation, and eventual assimilation” (Park, 1950, p.138). Subsequent publications have specified different types of assimilation. For instance, in *Assimilation in American Life* (1964), Milton Gordon argued that acculturation, the minority group’s adoption of the “cultural patterns” of the host society, typically comes first and is inevitable. It is largely a one-way process. Structural assimilation, “entrance of the minority group into the social cliques, clubs, and institutions of the core society at the primary group level,” will trigger all other types of assimilation (Gordon, 1964, p. 80). This means that discrimination and prejudice will decrease and intermarriage will become more common, ultimately removing separate identities. Spatial assimilation (Massey, 1985) is used to explain residential segregation of major racial and ethnic populations in the US. It draws on the assumption that spatial distribution reflects human capital; therefore, the movement of immigrants (and minorities) into suburbs is an example of spatial integration (Alba and Nee, 1997). Contrasting the straight-line

assimilation model (Gans, 1973; Sandberg, 1973), there is the "bumpy-line theory of ethnicity," which is the idea that assimilation is dynamic and "each generation of immigrations faces a distinctive set of issues in its relationship to the larger society and to the ethnic group, and their resolution brings about a distinctive pattern of accommodation" (Alba and Nee, 1997, p.832-833). Assimilation theory has been criticized to be idealistic, simplistic, and no longer applicable to more recent immigration flows.

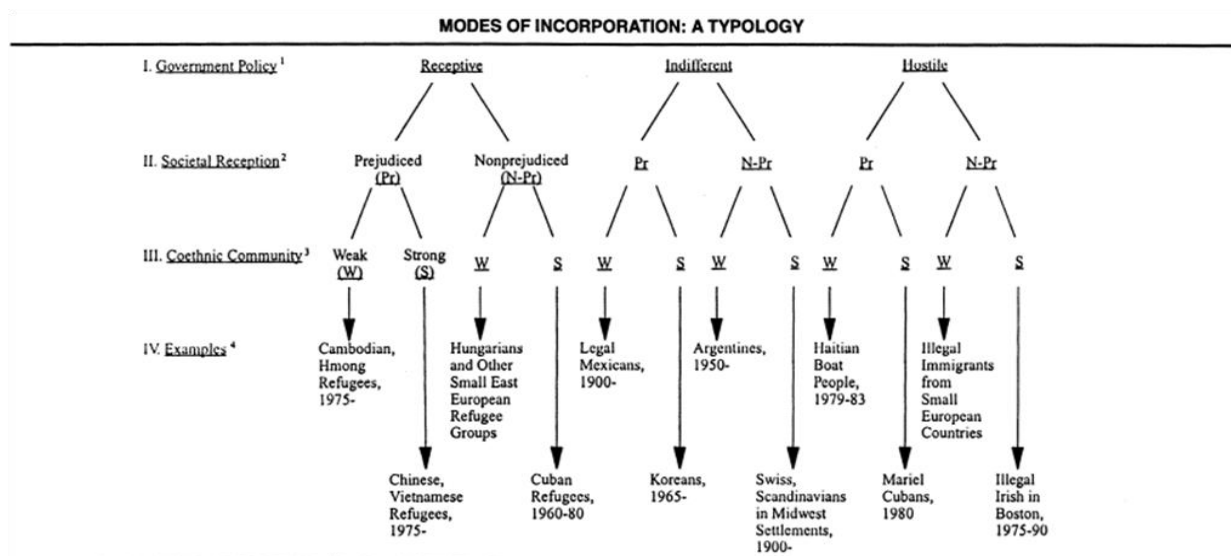
While traditional assimilation theory assumes that children of immigrants will 'become American,' integrate well into US society and have better socioeconomic outcomes than their parents, segmented assimilation theory offers an adapted alternative, namely one that recognizes that different groups have different opportunity structures and trajectories (Portes and Zhou, 1993). The concept was introduced by Portes and Zhou (1993) who started looking at the trajectories of the contemporary second generation of post-1965 immigration to the US. Reacting to the idea that assimilation is a uniform, linear process, the authors argue that "adopting the outlooks and cultural ways of the native-born does not represent, as in the past, the first step toward social and economic mobility but may lead to the exact opposite" (p. 81). In other words, migrant children could experience upward mobility or downward assimilation depending on who they are assimilated to because the spatial and social context becomes reinforcing. Immigrant children and children of immigrants in lower-income neighborhoods and families may take on the high unemployment and high school drop-out rates of their neighborhood and therefore experience worse socioeconomic outcomes, or downward mobility, compared to their parents. Fewer resources, role models, social networks, and educational and job

opportunities, coupled with persistent ethnic discrimination result in a pessimistic outlook for youth growing up in these environments. This framework stresses the importance of the neighborhood influences; an individual's trajectory is largely determined by the resources available to them and their socioeconomic environment. In addition, skin color and a lack of mobility ladders help determine whether an individual is vulnerable to downward assimilation. It is worth noting that spatially, the concentration of poverty is no longer (solely) in the inner cities but increasingly in the inner-ring suburbs where (new) immigrants are settling. Changes in the spatial distribution of immigrants and poverty landscapes affects how poor or working class immigrants live and access jobs.

Three general paths are identified: 1) integration into the white middle-class, 2) assimilation into the underclass; 3) "rapid economic advancement with deliberate preservation of the immigrant community's values and tight solidarity" (Portes and Zhou, 1993, p. 82). An individual's outcome is affected by processes of racialization and the changing structure of economic opportunities, specifically referring to the bifurcated labor force and shrinking middle class. A typology on the modes of incorporation of immigrants in the US by Portes and Rumbaut (1990) help us understand which groups are most vulnerable (Figure 1). For instance, Cuban refugees arriving 1960-1980 are not very vulnerable because government policy was receptive, the societal reception was non-prejudiced, and they had strong co-ethnic community ties. As shown in Figure 1, undocumented immigrants tend to be the most vulnerable. In the case of undocumented Hispanic immigrant youth, we could argue that government policy is hostile and societal reception is prejudiced, making them vulnerable to downward assimilation. My study touches upon the co-ethnic community variable by assessing whether Hispanic immigrant



youth are likely to primarily become manual workers or if they will form a more diversified occupational structure.



SOURCE: Adapted from Alejandro Portes and Rubén G. Rumbaut, *Immigrant America: A Portrait* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 91. Copyright © 1990 by The Regents of the University of California.

1. Receptive policy is defined as legal entry with resettlement assistance, indifferent as legal entry without resettlement assistance, hostile as active opposition to a group's entry or permanence in the country.

2. Prejudiced reception is defined as that accorded to nonphenotypically white groups; nonprejudiced is that accorded to European and European-origin whites.

3. Weak coethnic communities are either small in numbers or composed primarily of manual workers; strong communities feature sizable numerical concentrations and a diversified occupational structure including entrepreneurs and professionals.

4. Examples include immigrant groups arriving from the start of the century to the present. Dates of migration are approximate. Groups reflect broadly but not perfectly the characteristics of each ideal type.

Figure 1: Typology of Modes of Incorporation. Source: Portes and Zhou (1993, p.84).

Gans (1992) also discusses how ‘second generation decline’ challenges the ‘straight-line’ assimilation immigrant success story. He asserts that “a significant number of the children of poor immigrants, especially dark-skinned ones, might not obtain jobs in the mainstream economy” (p. 173). At the same time, however, they do not want to take on the low-wage, long hours, and ethnic niche jobs their parents do. They reject ‘immigrant jobs’ because they have become ‘Americanized’ in their work and status expectations. This is what Zhou (1997b) refers to as the ‘second generation revolt,’ the oppositional culture of children of immigrants who feel excluded from mainstream

American society due to institutional discrimination and segregation, leading to social isolation and deprivation. Consequently, they end up seeking alternative routes and may participate in informal economies. The children of undocumented immigrants are most vulnerable to this downward trajectory because they are more likely to live in poverty, even if they themselves are US citizens. When the children are also undocumented this disadvantage is exacerbated. Gans expresses concern that children of immigrants may become part of the urban ‘underclass’ if they get involved with illegal activities.<sup>6</sup> Young men are particularly vulnerable to this (Gans, 1992; Haller et al, 2011).

Even if immigrant children are reluctant to take on the low-wage jobs of their parents, in reality, this is often the case according to Waldinger, Lim, and Cort (2007). Their analysis of occupational attainment among children of Mexican immigrants documents widespread stagnation in the working class, with many second-generation Mexicans filling occupations not too different from those of their parents. Using data from the Current Population Survey (CPS), and Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS), Portes and Fernandez-Kelly (2008) found evidence to support segmented assimilation, suggesting some youth are educationally and occupationally left behind. Those left behind are likely to come from families with parents with low human capital. Again, mode of incorporation is considered worst for phenotypically non-white immigrants and those nationalities with large proportions of unauthorized entrants. Haller, et al. (2011) also analyze Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS) data and confirm patterns of segmented assimilation. Like Waldinger, et al. (2007), they

---

<sup>6</sup> To clarify, being part of the so-called underclass does not mean or necessarily lead to involvement with illegal activities. In turn, involvement with illegal activities in and of itself does not make an individual part of the ‘underclass.’

conclude that trajectories may vary by nationality. Controlling for other variables, Mexican-Americans are 47% more likely to experience downward assimilation than other groups (including Nicaraguans, Colombians, Cubans, and several Asian nationalities). The consistent disadvantage of Mexican-Americans and black Caribbean – even after controlling for individual, family, and school variables – is attributed to unfavorable receptivity context for these groups in the US.

Zhou (2001, p.20) claims that “there is little question that many, possibly even most, immigrant children are heading upward (...) On the other hand, there is good reason to believe that the children of the immigrant working poor will undergo a rather different and far less brilliant fate.” Asians are moving up most rapidly, Mexicans most slowly, and other Hispanics and blacks are in between. However, there is diversity within these groups as well. Similarly, in a New York City study about second generation immigrants in the workforce, Kasinitz, et al. (2004) find that second generation immigrants have different labor market profiles compared to their parents and they are largely assimilated into the mainstream labor market. The ethnic economy plays a small role for second generation young adults. That said, there are variations by gender and ethnicity.

Using the CILS, Haller et al. (2011) construct a downward assimilation index based on 6 indicators: 1) abandoned school with less than a high school diploma; 2) annual income below the poverty level; 3) unemployed and not in school; 4) early childbearing; 5) at least one incident of arrest (but not incarcerated); 6) at least one incident of incarceration. As visualized in Figure 2, these are outcomes of downward assimilation. Situations like coming from a two-parent household and doing well in

school improves occupational outcomes and decreases the likelihood an individual will partake in ‘deviant’ behavior. The extent to which these indicators (specifically unemployment) are reported by Hispanic immigrant youth may allude to whether this group is particularly vulnerable to “downward assimilation.”

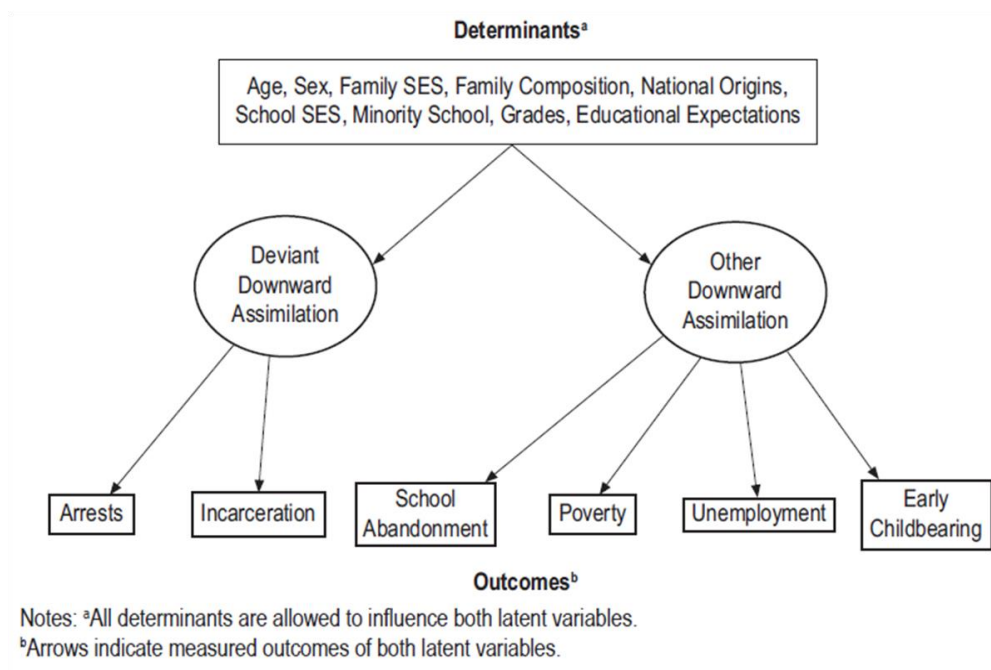


Figure 2: A latent variable model of downward assimilation. Source: Haller et al. (2011, p. 754)

In response to this paper, Alba, Kasinitz, and Waters (2011) argue that “the kids are (mostly) alright.” Although non-Hispanic white children of immigrants often experience racial discrimination and some drop out of high school and/or become involved in gangs or drugs, downward assimilation is not as widespread as others suggest. There are also advantages of being a minority, for instance diversity outreach programs and affirmative action. Their main point of disagreement is about how downward assimilation is defined because, according to Alba, et al. (2011), most

Americans are affected by the polarizing labor market. Many are unable to attain the human and social capital that would allow them to attain the highly paid jobs or even middle-income jobs they hoped for. Indeed, many native-born Americans with native-born parents are negatively affected by the changing economic structures of the twenty-first Century. The emerging ‘hourglass’ economy increases income disparities between rich and poor, and has led to higher un(der)employment rates, occupational segmentation, niche shrinkage, and fewer middle-income jobs with benefits (Gans, 1992; Portes and Zhou, 1993; Zhou, 1997b). Additionally, children of immigrants are more likely to obtain higher educational and occupational attainment relative to their immigrant parents if they came to the US without a high school degree and work menial jobs. Though these observations hold true, it would be naïve at best and dangerous at worst to assume white middle-class children face the same labor market obstacles as Hispanic children of immigrants. Studies repeatedly show how race, residential location, socioeconomic status, country of origin, and context of receptivity matter. Moreover, since migration patterns tend to reflect this bifurcated labor market structure – with high and low human capital flows of migrants – migrants are more likely to be part of the most marginalized poor communities. Their opportunity structures are different and this needs to be acknowledged. How youth navigate these challenges and how this varies based on their documentation status is the focus of this project. This is understudied because current segmented assimilation models assume common documentation or “policy” status.

Perspective	Primary proponents	Views toward assimilation	Empirical basis
<b>Cultural perspectives</b>			
Hispanic challenge	Samuel Huntington	Pessimistic, not happening	Theoretical
The new melting pot	Richard Alba and Victor Nee	Optimistic, occurring just as in generations past and transforming society's mainstream	Secondary review of historical and contemporary research on immigrant assimilation
<b>Structural perspectives</b>			
Second-generation advantage	Philip Kasinitz, John Mollenkopf, Mary C. Waters, and Jennifer Holdaway	Optimistic, the second generation is situated in a social and cultural space that works to its advantage.	Cross-sectional study of second-generation young adults in New York City
Generations of exclusion	Edward Telles and Vilma Ortiz	Pessimistic, Mexican Americans stagnating into the working class or assimilating into a racial underclass	Longitudinal study of three-plus generations of Mexican Americans in Los Angeles and San Antonio
Segmented assimilation	Alejandro Portes and Rubén Rumbaut	Mixed, assimilation may help or hurt social and economic outcomes depending on parental human capital, family structure, and contexts of incorporation.	Longitudinal study of second-generation youths in San Diego and South Florida from early adolescence to young adulthood
Age of migration	Rubén Rumbaut, Dowell Myers, and Barry Chiswick	Mixed, native-born youths and those arriving at an early age have definite linguistic and educational advantages. Migrants arriving in adolescence are at risk.	Analysis of 2000 census data and various Current Population Survey data

Figure 3: An overview of theoretical perspectives on assimilation. Source: Portes and Rivas (2011, p. 222).

The general consensus seems that the children of immigrants are mostly doing well; they are obtaining higher educational attainment than their parents, they are entering the mainstream labor market, they are fluent in English, and they spatially assimilate into a range of neighborhoods. However, higher education than your parents is no longer guaranteed and a small but significant group will experience ‘downward assimilation’. Risk factors include being non-White, living in a low-income neighborhood, and having parents who are undocumented, do not speak English, and do not have much education. Disadvantages are being reproduced rather than diminished over time as the children of poor immigrants come of age (Landale and Oropesa, 1995; Oropesa and Landale, 1997). This can translate into poorer educational, employment, health, social, and/or economic outcomes.

The segmented assimilation literature talks less about children who are

undocumented, in part because it is predominantly focused on children born in the US, but it is clear that this would add risk. I believe, as Abrego (2011) articulates, that the framework of segmented assimilation “underemphasizes the significance of legal status (Abrego 2006) in favor of examinations of the role of human, economic, and social capital, and it therefore misses the diversity of experiences among different subgroups of undocumented immigrants (...) Diverse experiences of illegality are similarly underemphasized in other contemporary studies of immigrant integration that rely on data sets with only few undocumented immigrant participants” (p. 339). Whether this in fact seems to be the case for Hispanic youth in Charlotte or whether this theory is challenged is explored in this dissertation.

Though the whole country is affected by this larger economic structure, place-based factors still matter. The economic structure and dominant industries of a place impact the migrants it attracts and degree to which this polarization may be impacting their lives. Furthermore, the cited studies do not necessarily translate to what is happening in Charlotte, North Carolina, because the findings are based on data from other places (Figure 1). For example, CILS data is collected from schools in San Diego, California and Miami/Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. In long-existing immigrant gateways the immigrant populations are more established than in emerging gateway cities like Charlotte. In addition, since Charlotte has a smaller Latino population compared to places like Miami, New York, and Los Angeles, one would expect Hispanics with similar socioeconomic and human capital backgrounds (e.g. those coming from Mexico, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala) to have similar trajectories here. Native-born Charlotteans may not be able to visually distinguish different Latino groups,

which may allude to a more homogeneous context of receptivity. In addition, most researchers look solely at the second-generation who were born in the US, whereas I focused on the 1.5 generation who were born abroad. This may impact the results.

Literature suggests that regional variations exist. For instance, in an editorial about Latinos/as in the South, Oboler (2012, p.6) writes that “[t]he social isolation that Latino/as experience in the US South is thus often forced upon them – whether by the local context in which they live and work, or as a result of their own efforts to circumvent racial prejudice and discrimination by constructing new identities that might help to create a different narrative about themselves. This raises larger questions about the impact and implications of the specificities of the region’s racial and ethnic relations for immigrants’ experience of integration.” In Charlotte and other twenty-first century gateways, the international communities and ethnic entrepreneurial activities are still being developed; political participation by immigrants is at its very early stage; and the local social and political infrastructure for immigrant and ethnic integration is far from being developed to the same extent as that in the established immigration gateway of Miami (Wang, 2011). Such insights provide insight into the context in which to view the findings of this dissertation.

In the US, there is no federal immigration integration policy. “American attitudes and policies towards immigrants in the workplace are both ambiguous and ambivalent, resulting in highly localized initiatives (...) and “very little appeared to be available to them with respect to policies and practices that had been shown to be effective in integrating foreign-born workers in American workplaces,” Creticos, et al. (2006, p.2) comment. According to the authors, “[e]ffective immigrant integration at the workforce



level requires a level playing field for all workers and businesses established through a series of thoughtful and explicit policies and practices by each of the key stakeholders”

(p.3). Based on the literature and their lessons learned, they offer seven guidelines on successful integration of immigrants into the workforce:

1. True integration occurs only if it is successful for the employer, worker, and community
2. Strategies directed explicitly at immigrants must be components of a broader range of initiatives that support the entire workforce
3. Workers with valid foreign credentials and proven competencies must be afforded reasonable opportunities to pursue careers in their fields
4. Adult education is on the front line for meeting the needs of immigrant workers
5. Concerns about the effects on wages and working conditions are first addressed through fair application of existing labor laws
6. Effective immigrant integration policies and programs are fundamentally local and state based and must engage all parts of the workforce system
7. Integration is a long-term process requiring continuous measurement and improvement. (p. 11).<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> See the full report with lists of actionable items to promote immigrant integration in the workplace, at the federal, state, local (workforce agencies, business, community and faith-based groups, unions, education and training) levels.

[http://www.workandeconomy.org/images/The\\_Integration\\_of\\_Immigrants\\_in\\_the\\_Workplace\\_Pre-publication\\_Release\\_7-31-06.pdf](http://www.workandeconomy.org/images/The_Integration_of_Immigrants_in_the_Workplace_Pre-publication_Release_7-31-06.pdf)

In Charlotte, the immigrant integration task force, a 29-member group, was tasked by the Charlotte City Council to recommend strategies to maximize immigrants' economic and civic contributions to Charlotte. In 2015, the task force presented their findings. They view promoting immigrant integration along the following axes:

1. Support Immigrant and Refugee Entrepreneurship and Small Businesses
2. Promote Public Safety
3. Ensure and Enhance Access to City Services and Promote Economic Development for Immigrant Charlotteans
4. Promote Citizenship
5. Promote Inclusion<sup>8</sup>

Although some of these lessons apply solely to first-generation immigrants, some of these may emerge as recommendations offered by the 1.5-generation Hispanic immigrant youth in my study.

Other initiatives, such as Welcoming America<sup>9</sup>, are more focused on receptivity. “A community’s receptivity—how its established populations and institutions respond to newcomers—influences not only the extent to which immigrants feel welcome or unwelcome, but also the extent to which newcomer and established communities effectively integrate with one another over time”. In a Twin Cities case study about the impediments to immigrant integration, Fennelly and Orfield (2008) found that the suburban native-born have mostly negative attitudes toward immigrants. In the focus groups, 58% of the immigrant-related comments were negative, 22% were positive, and 21% were mixed. The

---

<sup>8</sup> Further details and specific strategies can be found at: <http://charmeck.org/city/charlotte/cic/get-involved/pages/immigrant-integration-task-force.aspx>

<sup>9</sup> For further details, see: <http://www.welcomingamerica.org/about-us/>

negative comments were often related to language and education. The positive comments pointed out diversity as a resource and immigrants' hard-working nature. Prejudice and xenophobia are increasing, according to their findings, for instance in the form of housing discrimination against minority renters and homeowners, and financial incentives that are only for Whites. In addition, there is increased segregation in schools and neighborhoods, in part because of changes in affordable housing laws. On a positive note, schools with a diverse group of students are breaking down barriers and gains are documented between first and second generation. This study examined if 1.5-generation Hispanic youth in Charlotte face similar economic, social, and structural constraints that limit their economic integration and upward mobility.

Receptivity is an essential and first step in integration processes in which “immigrant newcomers and the communities in which they settle — both the individuals and institutions—mutually adapt to one another. Integration is also an endpoint reached when individuals only minimally perceive themselves and others in ethno-racial and national terms, when these attributes have, at most, a negligible negative impact on opportunities and life chances” (Jiménez 2011, 4)” (Harden, et al., 2015, p. 4). According to the authors, there are three main levels of receptivity: i. Individual/community. How people respond to and interact with one another; ii. Institutional. How immigrants interact with and are received by institutions such as schools; iii. Political. Policies in place (city, state, federal) that impact immigrant lives. This dissertation applied these levels of receptivity and the dimensions of integration to systematically assess how Hispanic youth in Charlotte are being incorporated in the labor market. Receptivity is arguably a precursor to inclusion, because integration depends not only on migrants' characteristics but also the socio-

political context they reside in. Next, I therefore discuss socio-spatial inclusion and exclusion as another main conceptual framework of this study.

## 2.2 Social-spatial Inclusion and Exclusion

As Soja (1980, p. 207) noted, referring to work by Harvey: “Space and the political organization of space express social relationships but also react back upon them.” Like Harvey and Soja, I refer to the socially produced organization of space when I discuss spatial relations and structures. In line with Lefebvre’s work, I approach space from the perspective that social space produces and reproduces social relations and the dominant mode of production. This means that, historically and currently, the process of capital accumulation leads to geographically uneven development (Mandel, 1987). To what extent this unequal distribution of resources and jobs is affecting Hispanic immigrant youth access to jobs is explored in this dissertation.

Since the social and the spatial are intertwined and one can reinforce the other, this dissertation draws on the concept of socio-spatial exclusion and inclusion to analyze how immigrant youth navigate their labor market opportunities. This concept can be used to explain how certain groups are socially and spatially excluded from services and public spaces based on class, race/ethnicity, religion, or other characteristics. For instance, in the case of undocumented immigrants, a combination of physical, political, economic, and social barriers work together to exclude them from certain jobs, neighborhoods, and public spaces. As a result, their experience of the urban labor market and the different Charlotte landscapes can be very different from other city residents.

Shove (2002, p. 4) defines social-spatial inclusion/exclusion as “an emergent property of the interaction between social practice, individual resources, and physical

infrastructure”, as illustrated in Figure 4. Conceptualizing inclusion/exclusion as such acknowledges the individual’s situation and their position in a larger social groups, as well as physical characteristics of the spaces they inhabit.

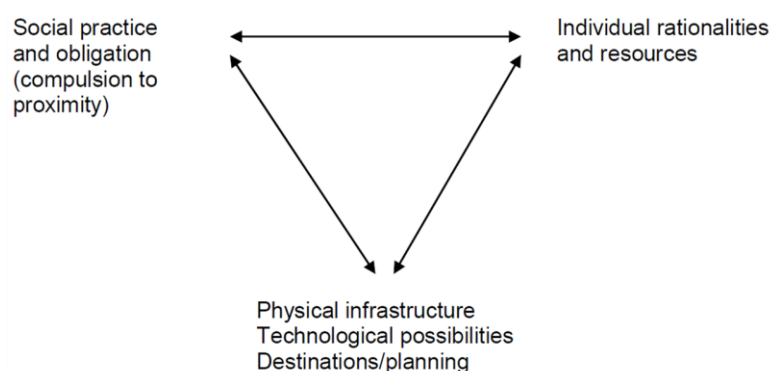


Figure 4: Defining social-spatial exclusion/inclusion. Source: Shove (2002, p. 5).

Poor minorities are persistently separated in neighborhoods, schools, jobs, and public spaces (Shove, 2002). That said, exclusionary practices go beyond physical segregation. Social and spatial distances reinforce each other, making segregation more concrete and multi-dimensional. Segregation, in turn, affects the ability for migrants to gain access to the mainstream labor market. According to Ruiz-Tagle (2012, p. 402), the dimensions of socio-spatial integration are: *physical* exclusion as residential segregation; *functional* exclusion as denied access to opportunities; *relational* exclusion as indifference and denied participation; and *symbolic* exclusion as imaginary construction of otherness.” These four dimensions can help identify ways in which Hispanic youth are excluded or included into the urban labor market. The “construction of otherness” particularly resonates with anti-immigrant rhetoric by media and politicians, referring to

(undocumented Hispanic) migrants as ‘aliens’ and ‘illegals’ who do not belong here and are undeserving of jobs, benefits, and resources.

Social-spatial exclusion/inclusion is often tied to the concept of the ‘underclass.’ The underclass refers to the most disenfranchised group of society. In addition to living in a poor neighborhood, members of the underclass face high unemployment rates, unequal access to work and education, government neglect, disinvestment, poor housing quality, and very limited prospects of upward social mobility. This multi-faceted poverty is often multi-generational and associated with high rates of teen pregnancy, participation in illicit activities, and other ‘deviant’ behaviors. Economic restructuring exacerbates the problem, creating a more segmented labor market and moving jobs away from low-income neighborhoods. The concept received much attention after Wilson (1987) coined it in his book about disadvantaged African Americans in Chicago.

Since the publication of Wilson’s book on the underclass, the concept has also been applied to Hispanic migrants (e.g. Chang, 2005; Firestone and Harris, 1994). D. S. Massey (1993) postulates that we can apply the term ‘underclass’ to Hispanics in the US but that it needs considerable modifications. Hispanics in low-income areas, he argues, are excluded from mainstream society similarly to African Americans, forcing them to participate in informal and illicit economies. However, the Hispanic population is less segregated than the US Black population due to lower levels of housing discrimination (research often highlights the advantages rather than disadvantages of ethnic concentration), and continual immigration means an ongoing influx of new people. For these reasons, we cannot assume the Latino experience of poverty is the same as the experience of poor African Americans. Cameron, Cabaniss, and Teixeira-Poit (2012), in a

more recent revisit of the underclass debate, believe that widespread use of the term ‘underclass’ distracts from our “understanding of the social processes and structural conditions that support and reproduce inequality” (p. 24) and perpetuates “individualistic, racist views of immigrants” (p. 23). Consequently, I am hesitant to rely on the ‘underclass’ concept in this study. That said, it is possible that we are creating a new and different kind of disenfranchised and deprived group, an underclass based on documentation status and therefore one that disproportionately affects Hispanics in the US. And, if that group concentrates in particular “barrios” in which they are peripheral or disconnected from, social and professional networks and resources, spatial exclusion is at play as well. Debating the exact terminology may be more of an academic exercise and not benefit the marginalized groups we wish to help. Though terminology is important and can have much weight, we must choose the vocabulary that migrants themselves wish to use and that is most likely to convey an urgent message to policy makers and the public.

Evidently, place and neighborhood matter when it comes to the various forms of assimilation or inclusion into society, and one's current and future conditions. The next section focuses specifically on place and labor market segmentation, which informs and provides a context for this dissertation.

### 2.3 Labor Market Segregation and Place/Space

The topic of place in the labor market process is a socially pertinent and complex issue that has been discussed at length by social scientists. Place is a central concept in human geography but has been defined differently across geographic paradigms. Generally, it is understood as the specific locales in which economic, social, and cultural

processes are grounded. The idea that place has meaning and that meaning is subjective, fluid, and contingent on our racial, gender, sexual, and class-based identities is well-established (e.g. Keith and Pile, 1993; McDowell, 1999). We influence the places we inhabit and places influence our behaviors and actions. The labor market process is also a broad notion. It involves many structures (institutional, political, economic, cultural) and actors (employers, employees) and includes (un)employment and income levels, the hiring process, knowledge about jobs, physically access to jobs, equal pay, and equal promotion opportunities. It intersects with housing markets, educational systems, individual and group preferences and behaviors, infrastructure and how they are interrelated in the urban setting. These are all spatially contingent because people, jobs, and resources are not equally distributed across space. Disentangling some of this complexity can improve our understanding of the interrelationship between place of work and residence, and labor market outcomes. In turn, it can help suggest policies and programs aimed at decreasing discrimination, improving access to employment, and enhancing labor market experiences, specifically for marginalized groups.

The location and spaces in which we work and live must be viewed in the broader context of the structure of the twenty-first Century, post-industrial city. Besides the suburbanization of jobs as it relates to new spatial divisions of labor (Massey, 2008; 1984), there are underlying forces of residential and labor market segregation that help us understand how place impacts labor market outcomes for racial/ethnic minorities. Explanations for work segregation can be divided into three interrelated categories: 1) segregation based on discrimination; 2) segregation based on disadvantage; 3) self-segregation. Even though discussions of these explanations draw predominantly from



literature on African Americans and first-generation immigrants, they can provide a structure for analyzing how Hispanic immigrant youth are being incorporated into, or secluded from, the mainstream labor market.

The idea that segregation is based on discrimination suggests that minorities are systematically excluded from neighborhoods and jobs in various ways. The US has a history of racially discriminatory social and economic policies that contribute to root causes of minority poverty and spatial segregation. Housing discrimination in the 1960s strictly divided White and Black Americans. Although post-Civil Rights policies are no longer overtly racist, many still discriminate against native-born and foreign-born minorities and underrepresented groups in practice. Discriminatory practices by mortgage and credit institutions arguably still limit minorities' access to financial capital, thereby further spatially constraining their location choices. For instance, Blanchflower, Levine, and Zimmerman (2003, p. 932) find that "racial disparity in credit availability is likely caused by discrimination." More recently, Pager and Shepherd (2008) reviewed major findings from studies of racial discrimination in employment, housing, credit, and consumer markets and identified intrapsychic, organizational, and structural causal factors. They conclude that, though racial discrimination is "not the only nor even the most important factor shaping contemporary opportunities," it does contribute "to the poor social and economic outcomes of minority groups" (p. 6, 20). A similar case of 'documentation discrimination' may be taking place when documentation status is known or assumed (through the racialization of status).

Zoning regulations and public transportation design also limit mobility of the poor, who are disproportionately non-White. Residents of low-income areas may be

discriminated against for racial/ethnic reasons and in addition face stereotypes employers have about people living in these ‘ghetto’ neighborhoods (Tilly, Moss, Kirschenman, & Kennelly, 2001). At a more local level, inter-jurisdictional competition for commercial land use, realtor steering, and business incentives continue to encourage job decentralization (Kneebone, 2009). Thus, where we live is also heavily influenced by institutions and structures, including access to financial credit, zoning by urban planners, and the management of residential properties by real estate agents and public housing managers. These actors manipulate and reinforce neighborhood patterns (Knox & Pinch, 2006). Institutional racism permeates the media, educational system, housing system, legal framework, and policies, and this is reflected spatially in our urban landscapes.

The hypothesis that disadvantage is the main reason why communities are segregated ties back to the early urban land use models by Park, Burgess, and McKenzie (1925), who attributed residential segregation to the basic mechanism of economic differentiation. Using an ecological approach, they describe communities as “territorial units whose distinctive characteristics – physical, economic, and cultural – are the result of the unplanned operation of ecological and social processes” (p. 225). More recent work has argued that these processes are not accidental but rather a result of structures of inclusion and exclusion based on class (e.g. Boswell and Cruz-Baez, 1997; Musterd and Ostendorf, 1998), creating a socio-spatial hierarchy with “winners” and “losers.” Groups can exercise their power to exclude less powerful groups from certain spaces and resources (social closure) and explicitly exclude certain groups (exclusionary closure) (Parkin, 1979). Multi-dimensional, multi-generational deprivation occurs when the spatial configuration and interrelationships of different aspects of deprivation (related to

transportation, health, housing tenure, household composition, overcrowding, social status, and employment) overlap (Pacione, 2003; Wilson, 1985, 2012).

The third explanation takes a more positive approach to residential and labor market segregation by space and race/ethnicity. In this case, spatial sorting is considered self-selecting and beneficial because it can minimize conflict between social groups, improve group social and political voice, create a sense of mutual support, enhance social and professional networks, and preserve culture (Knox and Pinch, 2006). Though the notion of this segregation being truly beneficial and self-selected may be challenged, there is some empirical evidence that support this explanation. This perspective is used more in the context of immigrants, which I discuss more in the literature section on ethnic enclaves and networks. Through exploring the process into the labor market for Hispanic immigrant youth, this study investigates whether the youth live and work in predominantly Hispanic neighborhoods and sectors, and how this potentially influences their socio-spatial strategies and labor market outcomes.

There is thus an ongoing discussion that considers how space interacts with skills, gender, networks, policies, and discrimination, and how this then manifests itself across the urban landscape. As Wang (2010) identifies, “labor market segmentation along the lines of race, ethnicity, and gender goes far beyond personal characteristics (e.g. human capital), the commuting time between home and work, and co-ethnic social networking. The social, cultural, historical, and institutional factors behind residential segregation among different racial and ethnic groups and classes at large are not only producing an unequal residential geography but also deepening socioeconomic inequality among the people who live in different residential areas” (p. 196). Discussions on this topic have

changed with the diversification of faces and spaces of poverty. Consequently, studies have included foci on women, children, and other minorities, and take into account diverse metropolitan settings and variations across inner cities and suburbs (Ihlanfeldt and Sjoquist, 1998; Kwan, 1999; Preston and McLafferty, 1999).

For instance, a case study of San Antonio illustrates the importance of place in labor market marginalization of youth. Bauder and Sharpe (2000) emphasize place-based explanations of poverty in investigating the spatial polarization of employment conditions among youth aged 18-24 across residential space. Employing principal component and regression analyses, the authors examine how the residential and neighborhood context – including education and skills of local labor, youth behaviors, and cultural distinctiveness of ethnic minorities – result in clusters of marginalized youth. They find that ‘marginalized youth’ are those in census tracts with high proportions of youth who do not have high school diplomas, live in poverty, and are neither enrolled in school nor employed. The percentage foreign-born population did not significantly impact youth labor market marginalization; however, tracts with high Hispanic representation faced increase youth marginalization. This study is worth noting because it emphasizes how youth marginalization is multi-dimensional and space places a considerable role. What employment opportunities look like for Hispanic youth in Charlotte, North Carolina may also be contingent on their residential context. In addition, it presents one of the ways in which we can attempt to measure youth labor marginalization, even though the methodologies are very different from the ones I use in this project.

Though connections between place and labor market outcomes are well established, scholars do not always agree on how to measure this interplay. Empirical

studies predominantly apply quantitative models. Wang (2010), for instance, ties together literature on spatial mismatch, spatial entrapment, social networking, and employer preferences and discrimination in a study on the influence of geography in the ethnic labor market segmentation process. Using a confidential data set extracted from the United States Decennial Long Form Data 2000 and a multilevel regression modeling strategy, she presents a case study of Chinese immigrants in the San Francisco metropolitan area. Geography matters, she finds, but in a non-linear way; “Place of home and place of work are not only the “location”—physical territory of residence or workplace—but also a medium through which gender relations and racial relations are integrated into a socially and spatially contingent labor market searching process” (p. 196). In this project, I investigated how immigrant youth experience place and geography in relation to their work access and perceptions, which is best captured using qualitative methods. Results may be corroborate, contradict, and/or complement previous quantitative studies.

Within the literature on labor market segmentation and place, spatial and skills mismatch are theories to explain employment disparities between social groups using various social, spatial, historical, economic, and political factors. The next section provides an overview of these theories in relation to the current study.

## 2.4 Skills and Spatial Mismatch

Spatial mismatch and skills mismatch inform my research by providing insight into the spatial and human capital variables that influence employment levels, access, and searching strategies. In 1968, Kain published a compelling paper linking discrimination in the housing market to the distribution and level of non-White employment in urban

areas. Racial residential segregation reduced job opportunities for blacks, and postwar suburbanization of employment and the drastic decreases of (manufacturing) jobs in the inner city aggravated the problem. Kain demonstrated how jobs are difficult to reach, because blacks have less information about them (distance decay of information) and less access to private vehicles. From this arose the spatial mismatch theory, which proposes that a portion of society is unable to apply for many jobs because of residential segregation and distance to employment. Suburbanization of businesses makes it challenging for people living in the inner city to reach these jobs, thus creating a ‘mismatch’ between labor supply and demand. High unemployment among inner city blacks is a consequence of this problem. Economic issues, in turn, contribute to downward-spirally social conditions and multi-faceted marginalization in urban ghettos. As the US transitioned to a post-industrial society, certain sectors (particularly manufacturing) that required a large number of ‘low-skilled’ workers lost a substantial amount of jobs, while others (e.g. tertiary services) that required more education were growing. The spatial aspect is that the sectors that declined used to be located in the central city, whereas the booming service sectors were being set-up in the suburbs. In fact, “in the early 1990s, 87% of the new jobs in the lower-paying and lower-skilled service and retail trade sectors were created in the suburbs,” US HUD (1997, p. 32) reports. This trend continued between 1998 and 2006, with almost every major industry shifting jobs away from the city center (Kneebone, 2009).

The suburbanization of certain industries goes hand-in-hand with the suburbanization of residences. Neoclassical economics explains this by pointing out how land values are cheaper as distance from the CBD increases. In addition, many Americans

have private automobiles, enabling them to commute. The poor, however, live in high-density housing closer to the CBD because they are more sensitive to commuting costs and less to land values (Alonso, 1960). Residents who are financially stable moved out to the suburbs, leaving behind inner city ‘social ills’ like crime and following job opportunities, resources, and services. Those unable to move are the “left behind” or “spatially entrapped.”<sup>10</sup>

To be clear, my goal is not to disprove or prove spatial mismatch theory in the way it has traditionally been measured because I did not have a large dataset to perform such a quantitative analysis. Rather, I examined how these theories resonance with the on-the-ground lived experiences of Hispanic immigrant youth and how documentation status, among other things, is interacting with space and skill to produce certain experiences of youth accessing employment. I considered travel time, distance, and transportation modes as well as youth’s perceptions of space in relation to their everyday practices and job options.

Problems associated with spatial mismatch, e.g. unemployment and poverty in the inner city, were not limited to that time. Though the topic was less present on the academic agenda in the early 1980s, it returned in the late 1980s. Reasons for this ‘revival’ were: 1) problems of the city—poverty, crime, joblessness—worsened measurably during the 1980s; 2) recent interest in the theory by non-economists, particularly the sociologists Wilson (1987) and Kasarda (1985, 1989) popularized the subject; 3) journalists reported a growing amount of anecdotal evidence that suburban

---

<sup>10</sup> Spatial entrapment can also occur through other factors, for instance by not having access to a private vehicle or public transportation.

employers in many large metropolitan areas were experiencing shortages of ‘low-skilled workers’ (Ihlanfeldt, 1994; Kain, 1992). I examined whether youth express feelings of feeling “entrapped” if they do not have access to transportation, or to what extent they have limited job opportunities in their neighborhood.

The spatial mismatch hypothesis remains relevant today, though scholars continue to debate the extent to which this is a causal factor of poverty and unemployment. Stoll (1999) claims that “though there are differences across residential areas in the employment of youth, indicating spatial cleavages in labor markets do matter, the precise mechanism that makes space matter is put into serious question” (p. 136). Race is equally important when examining youth labor market access and employment discrimination limits access to jobs for black and Latino youth.

Critiques of the spatial mismatch concept have argued that it is not the distance between jobs and minorities that is leading to reduced labor market outcomes, but that a significant portion of society is unable to apply for a large number of the jobs because they do not have the appropriate skill set. This is referred to as “skills mismatch.” Akin to spatial mismatch theory, it originated and is particularly applied to the situation of blacks in the US, though other groups could be included into this analysis. Wilson (1987) attributes the social dislocation and high unemployment rates of blacks in inner-city Chicago to historic and contemporary discrimination, migration, age structure of racial and ethnic groups, and structural and spatial changes in the labor market, including economic and institutional changes in the inner city. The problem is that minorities are not receiving the same levels of quality education – and thereby opportunities – compared to whites, leaving them less likely to succeed and often unable to break



vicious, generational cycles of poverty. These ‘skills,’ or human capital, go beyond education, though, and include the intangible ‘soft skills’ that can advance an individual’s overall labor market opportunities. In reality, spatial and skills mismatch theory go hand-in-hand because minorities are disadvantaged, compared to whites, in terms of skills and education, and this is sustained and perpetuated by residential segregation. This research develops our understanding of how space and human capital interact with other factors to influence Hispanic immigrant youth job ‘match’ or ‘mismatch.’

Besides mismatch and disadvantage, literature on immigrants and work have also pointed out advantages associated with labor market segmentation, as discussed in the subsequent section.

## 2.5 Social Capital and Ethnic Networks

Spatial and skills mismatch theories can be extended to include Hispanics because Hispanics are disproportionately living in low-income neighborhoods with fewer resources and lower quality schools compared to Whites. In addition, children of Hispanics may live in linguistically isolated households that limited their English ability and connection to mainstream networks, thereby influencing the resources and strategies they use to navigate the labor market. Interestingly, though studies looking at African American poor in the US have often focused on the disadvantages they face, immigrant ethnic residential and labor market segregation is also viewed in a positive light. Scholars have argued that segregation can actually improve an individual’s social capital. Social capital can be defined as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition” (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 248).

Research by scholars such as Light, Bonacich, Modell, Portes, Wilson, Jensen, and Borjas in the 1970s and 1980s provided the foundation of ethnic economy concept which broadly includes any immigrant or ethnic group's self-employed, employers, and co-ethnic employees (Bonacich and Modell, 1980; Light, 1984; Light et al, 1994; Light, 1972; Light and Bonacich, 1991; Portes and Jensen, 1989; Wilson & Portes, 1980). The enclave economy is part of the ethnic economy but bounded by location and exhibits a common cultural component, bounded solidarity, and enforceable trust within that community. Spatial concentration may help ethnic communities by: 1) allowing them to be close to market and labor supply (acting as an incubator); 2) facilitating linkages between businesses, networks, and potential employers; 3) offering potential for agglomeration economies; and 4) providing a central ethnic place (Kaplan, 1998). Spatial location can hence operate as a resource in enhancing labor market prospects, but this does not occur uniformly; spatial patterns vary depending on the types of resources used, the sectoral composition of the ethnic economy, and the maturity of the ethnic economic activities. Co-ethnics benefit from living in this bounded space through co-ethnic network hiring and bounded solidarity, the altruistic dispositions of actors motivated by strong identification with one's own groups, sect, or community (Portes, 1998).

Scholars are divided on the consequences of ethnic labor market segmentation. The social capital approach highlights the positive impacts of serving co-ethnic groups, hiring co-ethnic low-cost labor, and working in protected, niche markets (Portes and Jensen, 1989; Wilson and Portes, 1980; Zhou, 1995). However, the structuralism perspective emphasizes the disadvantages of concentrated ethnic businesses. It claims ethnic entrepreneurship is a result of constrained participation in the mainstream labor

market. Facing linguistic and cultural barriers or unequal access to information, services, and credit, ethnic groups are forced into segregated labor markets (Assudani, 2009; Deakins et al, 2009; Kitching et al, 2009). People living and working in the enclave may experience truncated social and professional networks beyond their neighborhood.

“[E]xclusion of outsiders, excess claims on group members, restrictions on individual freedoms, and downward leveling norms” may also occur (Portes, 1998, p. 15).

Exclusionary closure is a way certain groups use their networks to increase in-group chances of getting similar jobs while decreasing the chances of outside groups accessing those jobs (Waldinger and Lichter, 2003). This supports ethnic niche formation and maintenance but can trigger hostility from outside groups, and employers may be concerned with exclusionary results that network hiring seems to produce.

Ioannides and Loury (2004) provide an excellent summary of the literature on the roles of social interactions, networks, and place play as individuals go about collecting information for the purpose of finding jobs. Overall, there is widespread use of friends, relatives, and acquaintances to search for jobs (by both unemployed and employed). This has increased over time and is generally productive. The use of network contacts to search for jobs often varies by location and by demographic characteristics. Unemployed women are less likely to use them than unemployed men. Educated, young, and black people are relatively less likely to use network contacts, whereas Hispanics, people in high-poverty neighborhoods, and people in cities are more likely. Anecdotal evidence suggests the internet is being used increasingly for job searching. “[R]esearch has already used network analysis to elucidate the origins of previous unexplained similarities in outcomes by race, ethnicity, and gender. Furthermore, it identifies the source of some

neighborhood correlations in labor-market outcomes” (p. 1086). For example, Elliott and Sims (2001) look at how methods of job search vary by race and location. Using the Multi-City Survey of Urban Inequality (MCSUI) conducted in Atlanta, Boston, and Los Angeles in 1992–1994, they analyze whether the neighborhood impacts on labor market outcomes are different for Blacks and Latinos ages 21-64 in co-ethnic concentrated neighborhoods (‘ghettos’ and ‘barrios’). The focus lies on how people look for jobs. Workers with no more than 12 years of schooling living in high-poverty neighborhoods were more likely (88%) than those in low-poverty neighborhoods to use informal job-search methods (74%). Results imply that Latinos are more likely than Blacks to use neighbors to acquire jobs whereas Blacks are more likely to use residential and organizational “outsiders.” My dissertation shines some light on what kind of networks Hispanic youth use and whether this varies according to their documentation status.

I investigated if ethnic network advantages (‘ethnic premiums’) and disadvantages (‘ethnic penalties’) hold for the 1.5 generation as they do to first generation immigrants. As of now, there is no empirical evidence that suggests the children of immigrants are concentrated in certain industries or segregated from the mainstream labor market. Children of immigrants typically steer away from ethnic entrepreneurship and ethnic niches in the labor market and gain social capital from ‘mainstream’ sources. In general, it is assumed their US education and English language ability allows them to assimilate into the mainstream labor force. However, this may be different for undocumented children and youth; therefore, this study explores whether they are more likely to rely on ethnic networks in accessing work compared to their documented counterparts – by choice or by necessity.

The spatial concentration of immigrant groups and new Hispanic settlement patterns bring opportunities and challenges for Hispanic youth. On one hand, places like Los Angeles with a high number of Hispanics have a better infrastructure for the needs of immigrant families than new gateway cities and rural areas. For example, schools have longer histories of multicultural classrooms and are equipped with interpreters who deal with non-English speaking parents. Also, strong ethnic networks that benefit immigrants have already developed. On the other hand, being outside a traditional gateway may be beneficial for migrants' employment opportunities and income levels (Crowley et al, 2006). Migration to areas with lower levels of globalization, lower costs of living, and lower disadvantage indicators (e.g. percentage poverty) can benefit immigrant children (Baird et al, 2008).

In short, place of residence and employment affects labor market outcomes, and vice versa. Interestingly, the literature on black segregation and poverty has largely been separate from the ethnic enclave literature and the former tends to focus on only the negative consequences of residential segregation, whereas the latter also highlights the opportunities. Moreover, white residential clustering is rarely even mentioned. The different focal points and language used arguably say a lot about how we view different racial/ethnic groups. A combination of human, social, and financial capital of individuals and groups interact with the institutional and structural forces to influence where people live and work, and what their labor market outcomes are. This framework can be used to explain why segregated communities by race/ethnicity can experience advantages as well as disadvantages in labor market outcomes. How these relationships work exactly for Hispanic immigrant youth is further fleshed out in this study.

In order to better comprehend the specific contexts in which children of immigrants and undocumented youth are growing up with in the US today, the final two sections of this chapter provides an overview of the data on these populations, tying in the theories mentioned in the previous sections.

## 2.6 Children of Immigrants

Understanding the changing demographic characteristics of US children and young adults is critical for shaping social programs and public policies. Today's youth is the most racially/ethnically diverse in US history. Consequently, the US population as a whole will continue to diversify. Children living in immigrant families are the fastest growing group of American children. In 2006, 12% of the population was first-generation immigrants and 11% were second generation (OECD, 2010). As of 2011, the Hispanic population in the US was around 52 million (16.7% of the total population) and Hispanics comprised 22% of children younger than 18 (US Census Bureau). Despite absolute declines in Hispanic immigration, the Hispanic population in the US continues to grow because Hispanics have higher birthrates and adults more likely to be in their reproductive years than non-Hispanic groups. For that reason, research on the lives and trajectories of Hispanic populations in the US is increasingly important, especially the outcomes of the children of immigrants since they make up a significant portion of the US's future labor force.

As a result of the growing number of immigrant children and youth in the US, more research is being done on the children of immigrants. Still, there is some but limited research on immigrant youth in the labor market. Using assimilation theory as their theo-

retical framework, White and Glick (2009) examined immigration policy, educational attainment of the second generation, residential assimilation of immigrant and ethnic groups, and labor market achievement. They look at economic progress for age and entry cohorts of immigrants in comparison to US-born age cohorts using 1994 and 2004 Current Population Survey data. Once adjusted for socioeconomic status, there is little difference between generations of immigrants in terms of their economic outcomes. However, there is considerable variation in occupational sectors of foreign-born and native-born. The second generation is less likely to work in service, construction, and production occupations, and more likely to be working in management, professional, sales, and office/administrative jobs compared to the first generation. The degree to which is the case depends varies by gender. There are fewer differences between the second and third generations in terms of occupations distributions. Overall, the adult second generation is less likely to live in poverty and will, on average, earn more than their parents.

White and Glick (2009) also find that labor force participation rates were higher among youth in 1989 than in 1999 for men, but they increased for women. In 1999, men and women showed different labor force participation rates by generation status. For instance, for men, participation is lowest among recent arrivals (89.62%) and gradually increases to 94.18% for third and higher generations. Among women, on the other hand, participation rates are lowest for the 1.5 generation (74.82%) but there is not much difference between recent arrivals, second generation, and third and higher generation (85.32%, 84.60%, and 85.09% respectively). The authors conclude that, as a whole, “immigrants and the second generation fare no worse than others who come from similar so-

cioeconomic backgrounds” (p. 146). However, no racial or ethnic subgroups were identified and analyzed. This is problematic because the aggregate outcomes can conceal some of the disparities within the group. For instance, some Asian groups tend to have better outcomes than Hispanic groups but if we join them all together we are unable to see those distinctions.

Gupta (2010) confirms that, overall, children of foreign-born parents are doing almost as well as children of native-born parents. However, certain ethnicities (such as Mexicans) lag behind. Labor force participation rates and unemployment rates for the 25-54 age group was about the same across generations, yet Hispanic children of immigrants were less likely to be in professional occupations than other groups. These findings support segmented assimilation theory. The opportunity structures available to young adults vary and diverse starting points lead to diverse trajectories. As a result, there remains a negative wage gap, even after controlling for socioeconomic differences, particularly in visible minority groups. Nevertheless, scholars may disagree on what is causing the negative wage gap and other differences between groups.

Existing publications discuss some of the determinants influencing the employment, unemployment and occupational outcomes of children of immigrants. Labor market gaps are often explained using supply- and demand-side explanations (Liebig and Schröder, 2010). Education is arguably the most important determinant of an individual’s labor market outcomes. Of greatest concern are therefore those youth who are neither in school nor working, placing them at the margins of the labor market and, in a sense, society. Other factors include: SES, parental educational attainment, attending a disadvantaged school, (parental) fluency in English, age of arrival, low expectations of



Hispanic children (e.g. by teachers, parents, employers), discrimination, place of residence, household composition, gender, ethnic and social capital, culture, citizenship, skin color, and the governmental and societal climate (Heath, 2010; Portes and Rumbaut, 2001). Many of these factors interact with one another. Discrimination manifests itself at various levels and may be based on ethnicity or immigration status. Age matters in that the younger the child is when they arrive in the US, the more easily they become integrated in mainstream society. The strength and extent of co-ethnic community and whether this community connects to professional or working class networks also matters. Being male, having at least a college degree, speaking English fluently, and being in the US for over 20 years translates into higher incomes but variations remain by country of origin, with Hispanic and black immigrants earning less than their Asian or white counterparts (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001). Having one native-born parent helps, particularly if that parent is the mother (Gupta, 2010). Still, “little is known about the relative importance of these factors” (Liebig and Schröder, 2010, p. 12).

There are more studies on educational outcomes of children of immigrants than labor market outcomes. Since an individual’s educational attainment is a major determinant of job prospects, these studies can provide insight into the labor market opportunities for immigrant youth. Numerous studies compare educational outcomes of immigrant children to other generations or native-born children with native-born parents (e.g. Haller et al., 2011; Portes and Fernandez-Kelly, 2008; Portes et al, 2009; Portes and Rumbaut, 2006; Zhou, 1997a; Zhou and Xiong, 2005). Similarly to assimilation literature, these studies have mixed findings. Whereas some reassure that the children of immigrants are doing well in school, others are more cautious to make such a statement.

Parallel to occupational studies, educational outcomes vary among immigrant groups. Since immigrants and their children are disproportionately represented among the “new urban poor,” they are frequently in schools with fewer resources (Wilson, 1997). Socioeconomic status plays a large role in their educational success. High costs of tertiary education and the significant differences in quality of education among elementary through high schools in the US, maintains socioeconomic inequalities and limits upward mobility for the lower class. This is particularly the case in the US, where levels of educational mobility are lower than in other countries, like Canada (OECD, 2010). There is also evidence that educational attainment may vary between new and traditional gateways. Stamps and Bohon (2006) report that educational attainment among Latino immigrants is higher in new Latino destinations. They attribute this finding to the trend that more highly educated Latino immigrants are also choosing new Latino destinations. English proficiency, ethnicity, and citizenship status are confirmed as factors strongly associated with educational attainment among immigrant children.

Another important indicator of an individual’s occupational outcomes is the educational attainment and employment of their parents. In this sense, Hispanic children are at a disadvantage because, compared to native-born White and Black household heads, Hispanic parents are less likely to have a high school diploma and therefore more likely to work low-wage jobs (US Census Bureau, ACS 2006-2010 data). What this entails for the different groups of children and their upward mobility is not completely straight-forward. Usually children of Mexican and Central American parents with low educational levels have poorer educational attainment and grades. However, even after controlling for parental education, ethnic group differences persist (OECD, 2010).

Parental culture, English language ability of the parents, and family size may also affect the amount of pressure parents place on their children to get a job, and the professional and financial support they can offer in this process. Ethnic segmentation into different occupational trajectories may be perpetuated by residential and school segregation. There is clearly a need for further investigation of employment experiences and outcomes and differences among groups, including policies and programs that improve access to jobs for underrepresented groups. Although this study is not able to look at a large or longitudinal sample, the qualitative, in-depth approach allows for an examination of the lived experiences of Hispanic immigrant youth accessing work that is frequently missing from the debate.

Integrating immigrant youth into the urban labor market does not solely depend on the characteristics of the individual and their families. Labor market characteristics also impact on the integration of immigrants offspring (Schröder, 2010). Networks play an important role when recruiting or promoting workers and immigrant children or ethnic minorities may not have access to these professional networks. In addition, discrimination can limit access to jobs. Schröder (2010) differentiates between taste discrimination and statistical discrimination. As humans, we tend to over-generalize and favor people 'like us'. In practice this means we may base our decisions, consciously or subconsciously, on stereotypes and assign (perceived) characteristics of a group to individuals. This may lead to discrimination at the individual level, for instance in a job interview. Discrimination also acts at a broader scale, for instance in the form of institutional labor market policies that were formulated by and work in the favor of well-off white, heterosexual, protestant males. Field experiments have indicated applying with

an English/American name is more likely to get you an interview than applications with a foreign name. An international labor organization study of eight countries, including the US, found that “[t]he minority testers usually have to make three to five times more tries as majority testers to obtain a positive response in the employment application process” (Schröder, 2010, p. 134). Interestingly, in this case, men seem to experience more discrimination based on ethnicity than women. Youth in this dissertation study were asked if and to what extent they believe their ethnicity and gender influences their labor market strategies and outcomes.

Ethnic capital can work in favor or against immigrants in the labor market. Controlling for educational level and age, Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Dominican children of immigrants between ages 25 and 54 may face ethnic penalties when accessing professional and managerial positions, but gender places a noteworthy role. For instance, Mexican men face greater penalties than Mexican women. Puerto Rican women experience ethnic premiums but the men face ethnic penalties, whereas for Dominicans the reverse is true. These ethnic inequalities are byproducts of social inclusionary and exclusionary practices and we must hold government entities, institutions, and employers accountable (Heath, 2010). Employment opportunities for immigrant youth also depend on society’s view towards immigration (Gupta, 2010). We currently observe extreme hostility toward Hispanic migrants and undocumented migrants. Some Americans fear for the ‘end of white America’ and believe ‘illegal aliens’ are exploiting the system and should be deported. The proliferations of these ideas among political representatives and media correspondents have further marginalized the Hispanic population. Mexicans are often targeted because they make up the single largest (Hispanic) immigrant group in

many cities, including Charlotte. They typically come with lower human capital and in larger number due to the direct border with the US (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001).

Furthermore, there is the factor of documentation status which is typically overlooked in existing labor market research, as discussed further in section 2.7. The issue of non-access or very limited access to post-secondary education and financial aid for undocumented youth impacts an array of other aspects in their lives. Although one cannot tell by looking at someone if they are undocumented, those with anti-immigrant views may ‘racialize’ immigrant status and label all Hispanics as ‘illegal Mexicans’ to dehumanize a diverse group and further their agenda. Moreover, we cannot underestimate the impact of constant fear and stress of deportation of themselves, their family members, or their community members, on the lives and wellbeing of these young people.

Heightened US-Mexico border control has decreased back-and-forth and seasonal migration, making settlements more permanent and family-based.

The broader sociopolitical climate also affects how Hispanic youth develop their identities. Mexican parents “report low bonds of solidarity and low level of support from their co-ethnics” (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001, p. 278). Their children have the lowest average self-esteem and are less likely to perform well in school, thereby most at risk for downward assimilation. In *Brokered Boundaries* (2010), Massey and Sanchez analyze how first and second generation immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean navigate social categories like “Latino” and “American” and their associated meanings. They argue that natives control interactions with “others” by creating institutional, social, psychological, and spatial mechanisms that delimit immigrants’ access to resources and even social status. Conflicts between what immigrant youth aspires to become, what their

opportunities are and what is expected of them by society and their parents put pressure on their confidence and identity. These effects are felt at the personal and broader community scales, and may also become apparent in this study.

Sibley (1995) draws a parallel with the uprising of North African immigrant youth in France, describing how “hostile contexts in the labor market and at the level of governmental and societal receptions, work in tandem with declining opportunities in schools and social welfare to structure limited opportunities and, as a consequence, frustration and despair” (p. 13). Like France in Africa, the US has a long-standing relationship with Latin America.<sup>11</sup> A significant part of the US Southwest used to be part of Mexico, until the Mexican-American war. Since the 1820s, the US has recruited Mexican guest workers to work in agriculture. In times of prosperity, a new wave of Mexican laborers would enter, only to be subsequently sent out of the country during economic downturns. History repeats itself, as we see the most recent wave of migrant workers entering in the economic boom of the 1990s and early 2000s, followed by ongoing criminalization, deportation, and discrimination after the 2008 crisis.

Even though there are some studies on the occupational outcomes and trajectories of children of immigrants, most studies focus on second generation, use quantitative methods, and fail to discuss the importance of documentation status. Barely any attention is paid to documentation status of the child or youth, mostly because the assumption is made that the child is US-born. Since this is not necessarily the case and the distinction between first and second generation can be blurry (therefore calling for concepts like the

---

<sup>11</sup> France had a strong colonial presence in North and West Africa. The US has influenced the economic policy and politics in many Latin American countries. Both nations receive many immigrants from these respective regions and have been criticized for neo-colonial practices to benefit their own country.

1.25, 1.5, and 1.75 generations), we must recognize the different statuses of the children of immigrants and how status influences the child's life. More qualitative methods that examine the lived experiences of the youth themselves need to be applied, specifically when looking at the undocumented, since reliable qualitative data sets on this population are practically inexistent. The current study helps fill that gap.

There is a significant difference in the (unauthorized) immigrant experience between adults and children. Even between the 1.25, 1.5, and 1.75 generations there are noteworthy differences. Rumbaut (2004), examining weighted 1998-2002 CPS data, shows that for immigrants of lower socioeconomic status (SES), those arriving between ages 13-17 are just as likely as individuals over 17 at arrival to work lower blue-collar jobs (25%), whereas there is no difference between foreign-born arriving at ages 0-5 and their US-born low SES counterparts (13%). In fact, for Mexicans, adults arriving between ages 13 and 17 have a greater chance working lower blue-collar jobs (36%) than foreign-born arriving over 17 (32%) and the same goes for not high school graduate rates (67% vs. 65%). Because the 1.25 generation has more in common with the first generation, I focus on the 1.5 and 1.75 generation which often consider themselves 'American' (like the second generation) but may be disadvantaged because they are not US citizens. In terms of educational attainment, however, being foreign-born and arriving between 0-12 does make you less likely to graduate from college or complete high school than other low SES US-born counterparts. Again, this does not take into account documentation status. A study investigating the impacts of documentation status on this substantial group of Hispanic children and youth in the US is therefore overdue.

## 2.7 Undocumented Youth

The issue of documentation adds another layer to this project because young people make up a notable portion undocumented migrants in the US. Approximately 11.1-11.5 million undocumented individuals reside in the US (3.7% of the population and 5.2% of the US labor force), almost half of which entered after 2000 (Figure 5). About 2.1 million migrated as children (Aydemir and Sweetman, 2006). About 60% are from Mexico, and about another 22% are from Central America (Kasarda and Johnson, 2006), though more recent MPI estimates (2008-2012 period) suggest 71% of the total unauthorized populations were born in Mexico and other Central American countries (Zong and Batalova, 2015). In addition, 72% of children with unauthorized parents live in a low-income household (Turner et al, 2015). Even though most Latinos in the US are US-born and about half the foreign-born Latinos are documented, 82% of all undocumented residents are Latino (King and Punti, 2012). According to the Pew Research Center, there were between 240,000 and 425,000 unauthorized migrants in North Carolina in 2010, and the US Department of Homeland Security (Hoefer, 2012) reports there were 260,000 in 2000 and 400,000 in 2011. 2008-2012 ACS data estimated about 342,000 unauthorized persons in North Carolina (Hooker et al, 2015). Mecklenburg County ranked 43th in counties across the US with the highest number of undocumented persons (55,000), 39% of which are eligible for the 2012 Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program and the 2014 DACA and DAPA expansions<sup>12</sup> (Batalova et al, 2014).

---

<sup>12</sup> “On November 20, 2014, the President announced a series of executive actions to crack down on illegal immigration at the border, prioritize deporting felons not families, and require certain undocumented



Little is known about the exact age break-down among undocumented migrants. Estimates suggest there were about 1 million unauthorized migrants under age 18 in 2010 (Passel, 2011) and 4.4 million ages 30 and under, 1.7 million of which arrived in the US before age 16 and are therefore eligible for DACA (Passel, 2012). The US DHS reported that in January 2011, 1.3 million were under 18 years and 1.6 million were 18-24 years. Each year around 65,000 undocumented youth graduate from high school (Gonzales, 2008). In North Carolina, there are an estimated 64,000 undocumented youth between the ages 16-24 and 56,000 between 18 and 24 years of age (Hooker et al, 2015).

---

immigrants to pass a criminal background check and pay taxes in order to temporarily stay in the U.S. without fear of deportation. These initiatives include:

- Expanding the population eligible for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program to people of any current age who entered the United States before the age of 16 and lived in the United States continuously since January 1, 2010, and extending the period of DACA and work authorization from two years to three years.
- Allowing parents of U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents to request deferred action and employment authorization for three years, in a new Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (also known as Deferred Action for Parental Accountability) program, provided they have lived in the United States continuously since January 1, 2010, and pass required background checks.

Due to a federal court order, USCIS will not begin accepting requests for the expansion of DACA on February 18 as originally planned and has suspended implementation of Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents. The court's temporary injunction, issued February 16, does not affect the existing DACA. Individuals may continue to come forward and request an initial grant of DACA or renewal of DACA under the original guidelines.”

Source: USCIS. Last updated April 15, 2015. Last accessed on Jan. 15, 2016:  
<http://www.uscis.gov/immigrationaction>

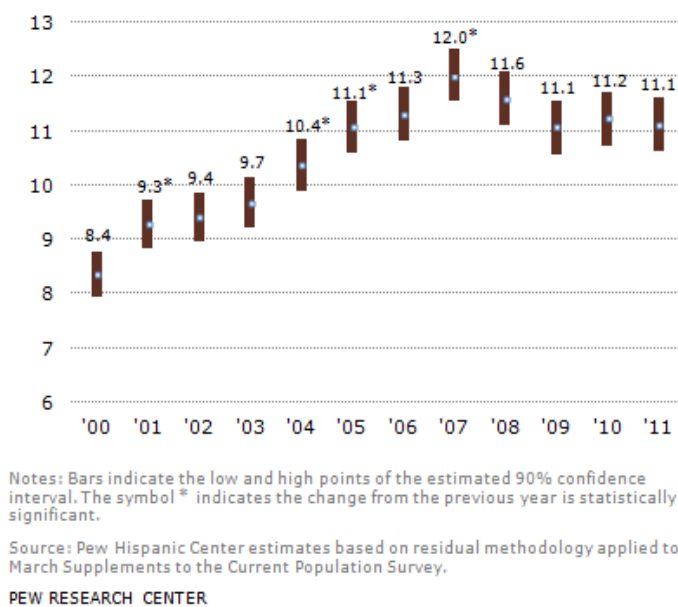


Figure 5: Estimates of the US Unauthorized Immigrant Population, 2000-2011 (in millions). Sources: Passel (2011, p. 1).

Documentation status influences how people interact with their physical and socio-institutional environment. For instance, to avoid authorities, undocumented persons are less likely to engage with educational, political and health care systems and risk ‘exposing’ their status. It is no surprise then that undocumented and mixed-status families are at risk. “Perhaps the most obvious limitation is the lack of research on the consequences of undocumented status” Landale, et al. (2010, p.352) assert in their book *Growing Up Hispanic*. “Of foremost political importance for Hispanic families is addressing immigrants’ legal status. This issue affects not only the undocumented but also authorized Hispanic immigrants (...) who are often falsely assumed to be in the country illegally” (p. 357). Indeed, there seems to be a need for studies that explore the impacts of immigration status on children and youth. This dissertation project aims to fill part of this gap.

Undocumented youth may face stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination, or perceived as “illegals” lacking rights to “American” privileges such as higher education (Abrego, 2011; Abrego and Gonzales, 2010; Murphy et al, 2014; Green et al, 2008; Portes and Rumbaut, 2001; Perez, 2015). In fact, “most Latino immigrants report experiences of discrimination and racial profiling in their everyday lives whether they are documented or not. Similarly, most claim a relative or friend who is undocumented and know intimately their struggles” (Cahill, 2010, p. 156). Reduced access to higher education is likely to translate into fewer opportunities for well-paying, stable jobs and “[b]ecause of legal and economic circumstances, many unauthorized migrants make minimal gains in income and experience limited spatial mobility” (p. 32). Labor market exclusion consequently forces people into the informal or underground economy.

Twelve years after the first introduction of the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act<sup>13</sup> in the US Senate in 2001, this federal legislation to provide undocumented students a pathway to citizenship, has repeatedly failed to pass. As of November 2012, twelve states have their own, often limited, versions of the DREAM Act and six other states have adopted laws explicitly barring undocumented immigrants from qualifying for in-state tuition. North Carolina does not fall in either category (as of April, 2016). Though the application process is complicated,

---

<sup>13</sup>The bill would provide conditional permanent residency to undocumented individuals who graduated from US high schools, arrived in the United States as minors, and lived in the country continuously for at least five years prior to the bill's enactment (with all the documents to prove it). If they were to complete two years in the military or two years at a four-year institution of higher education, they would obtain temporary residency for a six-year period and may qualify for permanent residency. In recent years, the DREAM Act failed to pass in 2009 and in 2010. In 2011, Democrats in both the House and Senate re-introduced the DREAM Act. The House passed the Bill, but the Republican opposition killed the Bill in the Senate (DREAM Act 2013).

passing the DREAM act at the federal and state levels will be a significant step in removing barriers to college access for undocumented migrants.

On June 17, 2013 the US Senate, under the presidency of Obama, passed an immigration reform bill drafted by a bi-partisan group of eight senators. Part of this bill offered undocumented persons an opportunity to obtain legal work status, a path that ultimately could lead to citizenship. The bill also includes border enforcement strategies and an expansion of the H1-B visa program for high-skills foreign workers<sup>14</sup>. Immigration reform received much attention in the media and among the public; advocates for immigration reform were elated that something was finally being done at the federal level to fix a ‘broken’ system. Immigration reform seemed to be on its way but backlash from opponents and a failure to pass the bill in the House of Representatives stagnated further development towards implementation. Since then, immigration overhaul legislation has left the central media and political stage, but the bill is still being discussed in the House and advocated for by proponents across the country.

Social scientists from disciplines including sociology, geography, political science, education, anthropology, and psychology, have become interested in examining the impacts of immigration status on children and young adults. Still, we know relatively little about this population. On one hand, they are highly visible in our neighborhoods and classrooms, more so than undocumented adults. They speak English and may identify as ‘American.’ On the other hand, they are part of a fearful population living in the shadows. Part of their identity (their documentation status) may be kept a secret, especially in

---

<sup>14</sup> The bill can be read at: <http://www.cnn.com/interactive/2013/04/politics/immigration-bill/>.

public places. At the same time, there is a growing group of youth who are openly ‘coming out’ about their status and engaging in immigrant activist movements (e.g. Arriaga, 2012; Gonzales, 2008).

Using critical theory as conceptual framework, Varela (2011) exposes the “socially constructed, hierarchical, insider/outsider hegemonized system” (p. 97) that impedes undocumented youth in their efforts to travel, drive, vote, be civically involved, access health care, and apply for scholarships, financial aid, loans, and jobs. Usually they were brought here by their parents at a young age and now consider the US home. Some families entered without authorization whereas other may have overstayed their visa. Unable to participate in many daily activities citizens consider normal, undocumented youth live at the margins of society, especially once they graduate high school. Indeed, the coinciding of a broken immigration system and a hostile economic and social environment has created a new form of exclusion. In a way, the system has created a new form of paradoxical exclusion. The state invests in everyone's public education but is not able to reap the full benefits of that investment for undocumented youth who cannot by state decree continue their education or apply for jobs.

Research on undocumented immigrants tends to be heavily qualitative due to the lack of in-depth quantitative data sets that reveal legal status. Some of the most extensive qualitative research focusing on undocumented youth has been done by Roberto Gonzales (Abrego and Gonzales, 2010; Gleeson and Gonzales, 2012; Gonzales, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011; Gonzales and Chavez, 2012; Gonzales et al, 2013; Sibley, 1995). In his dissertation, Sibley (1995) aims to construct a theory of undocumented resident “illegality.” In this framework, “illegality” is social construction that is produced and re-produced by

politicians, the media, and others that benefit from the systematic subjugation of unauthorized migrants. Indeed, a human being cannot be ‘illegal,’ only the acts that one commits. However, by extending the offense of crossing the border without papers or overstaying a visa to the person, dehumanization occurs.

The dehumanization of minority groups is a commonly used tactic to turn the public against a certain group. In the case of (Hispanic) migrants, opponents categorize migrants as ‘other,’ or ‘alien’ (other/less than human), giving them ‘permission’ to deny basic human rights. The goal, then, is not to fully exclude unauthorized migrants from the labor force – after all, readily available cheap labor is required in this capitalist economy – but to allow for this exploitation to continue. Notice that, when unauthorized migration is discussed, little if anything is said about the employers and companies hiring undocumented migrants in the first place. US residents benefit from lower prices for a wide variety of goods and services as a result of this cheap migrant labor force. Until we are willing to recognize that, employers will continue to hire undocumented workers and these migrants will continue to be exploited; “[w]hile they are central to the US economy and labor market, they experience very little job mobility and the racial and spatial aspects of their illegality keep them in a protracted state of social and legal liminality, or “illegality” (Sibley, 1995, p. 62).

Gonzales has written extensively about the day-to-day lives of unauthorized Latino youth, particularly in the Los Angeles area. Life-course scholars have marked individuals’ lifespan in various ways. Gonzales outlines four major stages in the lives of undocumented 1.5 generation: 1) Childhood. Children are more resilient in the transition phase from their country of birth to the US and their childhood is “distinctively shaped by

their parents' "illegality" and poverty" (1995, p. 64). 2) Childhood to early adolescence. This is a period of "suspended illegality" during which individuals are sheltered in the school system. Not yet confronted with the limitations of their status, they have expectations and ambitions in life similar to their peers'. 3) Adolescence. Barred opportunities as a result of their status become apparent and adolescent immigrants are challenged to come to terms with this part of their identity. Their exclusion from society is noted in their day-to-day lives: from getting a driver's license, voting, going out to bars and clubs, to renting a movie, getting a bank account, and traveling. 4) Adulthood. As adults, the undocumented 1.5 generation now feels the widespread implications of their status, barred from applying for jobs, loans, mortgages, and health insurance. In response, individuals are forced to work low-wage, uncertain jobs with long, irregular hours, and not make long term plans. Fear of getting 'caught' takes a significant toll on their wellbeing. Individuals of the 1.5 generation experience their "illegality" differently than their parents do, because they grew up (mostly) in the US and are therefore similar to their US-born peers. However, they often end up working the same jobs as their parents (e.g. landscaping, construction, housekeeping, selling food or other products) because they are lacking nine important digits. Occasionally, they resort to driving without a license (and auto insurance), selling drugs, or working under someone else's social security number. Though immigration status is not a permanent characteristic, attempts to undergo status change can take several years and even over a decade.

Returning in a way to where this literature review chapter began, documentation status has become a new axis through which segmented assimilation takes shape. In comparisons between two brothers and two sisters with different statuses (one

documented, the other undocumented), Gonzales (2008a) illustrates the divergence of their paths and the “conceal-reveal dynamic.” Although the siblings have very similar experiences growing up in the same family and attending the same schools, the undocumented sibling faces considerably more challenges. What sets the undocumented woman apart from the undocumented man in these two examples is that the undocumented woman did very well in school and was able to attract support from her teachers and other adult mentors to get a BA and an MA. Revealing her status has opened doors to private scholarships. The undocumented man, on the other hand, had not finished high school and was working odd jobs, struggling to make ends meet. This suggests that those who do well in school are more likely to reveal their status to gain access to support and resources. At the same time, Gonzales alludes to the idea that conceal-reveal decisions are made constantly and depend on the situation. Most commonly, the choice is to conceal, sometimes even to close friends or partners. However, even if undocumented youth are able to overcome face structural barriers in postsecondary institutions and obtain a college or even graduate degree, this does not guarantee they are able to find work. Underemployment is therefore more of a problem than unemployment in this demographic.

Several other studies have explored how immigrant youth experience and navigate their ‘illegality’. For example, King and Punti (2012) use in-depth narrative accounts written by 15 youths over a period of 18 months. The authors argue that documentation status is experienced and understood largely in racial terms, as a consequence of US public discourse that is often racist and associates Latino ethnicity with undocumented legal status. Narratives of (il)legality within interviews are used to



understand how youth experience their status and how it impacts their identity development and relationships to others. In these narratives, some of the antagonists were actual or potential employers. Threatened or actual denial of employment may occur as a result of an individual's undocumented status, or if they are assumed to be undocumented because they are Latino. It was interesting to see how this racialization came up in my interviews.

Ellis and Chen (2013) also examine identity development among 1.5-generation undocumented youth, “focusing on how undocumented college students negotiate the interplay of acculturation, ethnic identity, and educational and career pursuits” (p. 251). Using grounded theory analysis and semi-structured interviews, they find that youth are unprepared for the impacts of their legal status. In attempt to deal with their ‘illegality’, youth enhance their positive attributes (biculturalism, bilingualism, maturity) and attempt to confront ethnic and legal stereotypes. While forming their career identity, they may blame themselves for constricted vocational opportunities, even though these are typically institutional.

Looking at the situation of undocumented youth through a lens of socio-spatial inclusion and exclusion makes sense in that their experience is marked by the duality of inclusion and exclusion. Negrón-Gonzales (2013) discusses how youth navigate their ‘illegality’ in their everyday lives. Oppositional consciousness is explained as an expression of this constant navigation of fear, shame, and the position as an outsider. As a result of this social exclusion, Chang (2005) refers to undocumented children as “special members of an underclass”. This, she argue, is not only unjust but also unwise because we are pe-

nalizing children for their parents' actions and potential economic burdens do not outweigh the contributions they could make if provided the tools and resources. Moreover, excluding them has a lasting impact on society and is an ineffective method of deterring illegal immigration. In other words, "[w]hat is at stake here is not simply the future of these undocumented migrant students, but rather fundamental questions about belonging and exclusion, social change and progress" (Negrón-Gonzales, 2013, p. 6).

Concerned with elevated high school dropout rates and other trends of downward assimilation, Hill and Torres (2010) analyze the paradox of aspirations and achievement among Latino students and engagement between their families and schools. Though Latino families still believe in coming to the US to get a better life, their educational patterns are not supporting upward mobility. Often placed in disadvantaged schools in low-income neighborhoods, and facing discrimination and low expectations from society have detrimental effects on Latino children. In addition, parents may not be able to offer the support their child needs due to linguistic, education, and cultural barriers, and their lack of understanding of the US (school) system, often leaving both parents and school staff feeling frustrated and misunderstood. This impacts how Hispanic children are viewed and represented in schools, and in turn may lead to feelings of reduced self-worth or oppositional identity among youth.

Scholars repeatedly highlight the need for more in-depth quantitative and qualitative studies that examine the effects of an undocumented status on youth. A problem identified with the current literature is that researchers mostly look at 'success stories', but we also need to consider the 'average' or lower achieving individuals to get a more realistic picture of this population (Abrego and Gonzales, 2010; King and Puntí, 2012).

This may include research on undocumented youth who have not completed high school or do not disclose their status to others (Ellis and Chen, 2013). In addition, Abrego and Gonzales (2010) call for community-based initiatives in addition to legalization, and the need for more large-scale, comparative projects applying wider methodological approaches. While conducting these studies we must find a balance between youth agency and oppression, because “[o]veremphasizing the resilience of immigrant youth may result in lack of proper support for them, while overemphasizing their special needs may portray them as victims” (Salehi, 2010, p. 795). We must also pay attention to gender and involve youth in the research process in order to make the research and interventions more successful and sustainable (Salehi, 2010). My dissertation adds to this small but growing body of work on undocumented immigrant youth and follows some of the suggestions from the current literature.

The issue of immigrant youth accessing college is complex and multi-faceted. Multi-scalar factors are at play: individual’s and household’s efforts and characteristics interact directly with the broader social and institutional context at the neighborhood, school, city, state, and federal level. Through structures of inclusion and exclusion, many immigrant youth (especially low-income, minority, and/or undocumented) are forced to become second-class (non-)‘citizens’. Too often the debate is polarized and set up in dualisms: undocumented vs. documented, Hispanic vs. White, Republican vs. Democrat, pro-immigration vs. anti-immigration. We need to think beyond these binaries if we want to stop ongoing circular debates where people are not actually listening to one another and understanding other sides of the argument. There is a disconnect between actors and scales, and therefore a demand to communicate more accurate and holistic presentation

about immigrant and reform instead of the sensationalized simplifications often presented in media and politics. This may include shifting the framework of immigration reform from a human rights/social justice issue to an economic development one to receive the support of certain groups.

My literature review provides an overview of the many factors influencing the lives of Hispanic youth today and gives an insight into what some of the obstacles to employment may be. Though Hispanic youth may have the agency and resilience to overcome these challenges, these variables do influence their life chances and can therefore help frame their situation. Though this is a local study, the studies demonstrate that we must see the local in the context of the larger economic, political and socio-cultural state, national, and even international influences at play. These multi-scalar dimensions, in turn, impact one another and are always changing. Access to ‘good’ jobs for low-income and minority groups is becoming an increasing concern as college costs continue to rise and the labor market becomes more competitive, often demanding a BA or higher for well-paying jobs. The strength of this study is that it emphasizes the lived experiences and perceptions of the youth themselves as they are going through the process of preparing for work and forming their identities as participants in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century urban labor market.

The following chapter presents the methodological approaches applied in this dissertation. Again, choices for the various methods and the mixed-methods approach are grounded in the literature, which will be cited throughout the chapter.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

To answer my research questions, I use a mixed-methods, case study approach that recognizes multi-scalar positionality and influences.

### 3.1 Case Study Approach

Immigrants have dramatically changed North Carolina's demographic and economic landscape. Between 1990 and 2000, North Carolina experienced the largest percent growth of the immigrant population (274%) of all states. North Carolina ranked second in percent growth of the total population for children with immigrant parents for both the 1990-2000 and the 2000-2013 time periods (224% and 133% respectively), and fourth overall for states with the largest absolute growth of the total number of children living with immigrant parents (223,000) (Zong and Batalova, 2015). Foreign-born from Latin American, Asia, and Africa live in every one of the state's 100 counties, work in all sectors of the economy, and comprised 9.1% of the state's workforce in 2008 (IPC 2010 using Census data).

Eleven of the eighteen new Latino destinations identified by Suro and Singer (2002) lie in the US South, with three of the "hypergrowth" metros in North Carolina: Charlotte, Greensboro, and Raleigh-Durham. These destinations experienced Latino growth rates of over 800% between 1980 and 2000 and were among the pre-emerging immigrant gateways, meaning immigrant influx did not start until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Singer, 2004; Zimmerman, 2011). The pre-emerging gateways tend to attract

Latinos from Central America and Mexico who are poorer and less educated than the native-born population, and have relatively low English proficiency and US citizenship rates (Singer, 2004). Other groups, for example Vietnamese, Burmese and Somali refugees, and immigrants from the Middle East, China, and India have settled and have found employment in Charlotte's dualistic labor market but have received less attention because their numbers are lower and they are less likely to be undocumented than migrants from Mexico and Central America. In Singer's revisions of the immigrant gateway categorization, Charlotte was listed an emerging immigrant gateway city (Singer, 2014). The rapid and recent influx of immigrants has brought new opportunities but also challenges to local government, public institutions, and residents, in areas including education, law enforcement, housing, and transportation.

Like many American cities, Charlotte is highly segregated by class and race/ethnicity. It has a fairly narrow economic base, reflecting a post-industrial, bifurcated labor market, with professional financial, business, technology, and health care jobs on one end and low-wage service jobs on the other. It has also experienced fairly recent changes in its racial/ethnic, class, and work geographies, most notably with the influx of immigrants, urban revitalization projects, and the suburbanization of poverty. Within two decades, Charlotte, and its surrounding Mecklenburg County, has transformed from "regional backwater" to a city with an important regional, even national function (Graves and Smith, 2010). The city has integrated the traditional and the global and become more international as well as remained distinctly Southern, exemplifying that processes and effects of globalization are shaped by place-specific characteristics. The restructuring of the economy, redevelopment and gentrification of certain neighborhoods,

and changing demographics have altered Charlotte's landscapes and geographies of wealth and poverty (Passel and Lopez, 2012).

Within the metropolitan areas, new settlement patterns have emerged. Clusters of people with mixed nationalities and ethnicities have formed in the older, middle-ring suburbs. Affordable housing and retail space has become available here as revitalization and gentrification of the inner city rings have increased the cost of land there and upper-middle class settlement in the sprawling outer suburbs continues to grow. For instance, as Figure 6 shows, immigrants are shaping three distinctive suburban clusters or corridors in the suburban middle-ring (the Eastside, the Southwest, and the North), each with slightly different characteristics in terms of gender, length of stay, home ownership rates, household size and income, and services and institutional infrastructure (Smith and Furuseth, 2004; Zimmerman, 2011). New opportunities as well as challenges have surfaced as a result of this international influx. Since Charlotte does not have traditional established international communities, most responses are reactive and the community remains divided on how to best approach the situation.

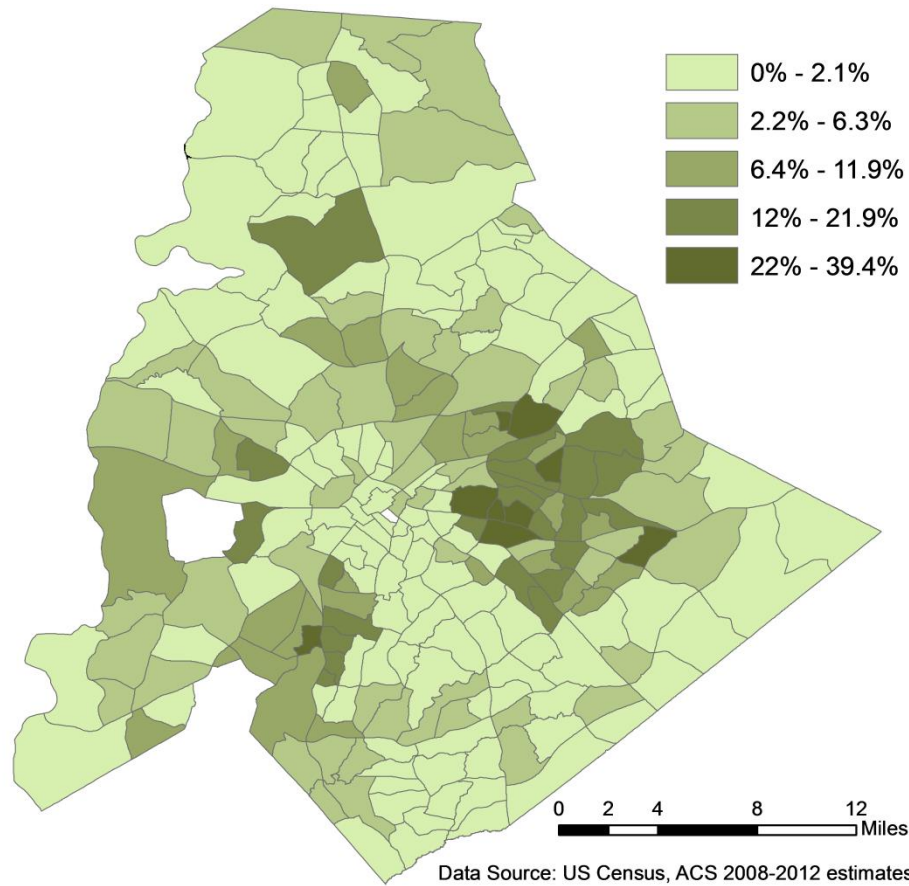


Figure 6: Percent Hispanic/Latino of the total population by census tract, Mecklenburg County. Source: author.

The substantial increase in the Hispanic population in Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) reflects the overall demographic shifts in Charlotte, the large number of Hispanics immigrants of child-bearing age, and the higher than average fertility rate of Hispanic women relative to other ethnicities (Figure 7). This means many of these children are transitioning into the labor market in the next 5-10 years. The UNC Tomorrow Commission reported that in 2017, an additional 30,000 high school students will graduate in North Carolina, 75% of whom are Hispanic (Vargas, 2012). Though some will possess a social security number, others will not and they will come to realize the full implications of their status as they come of age.



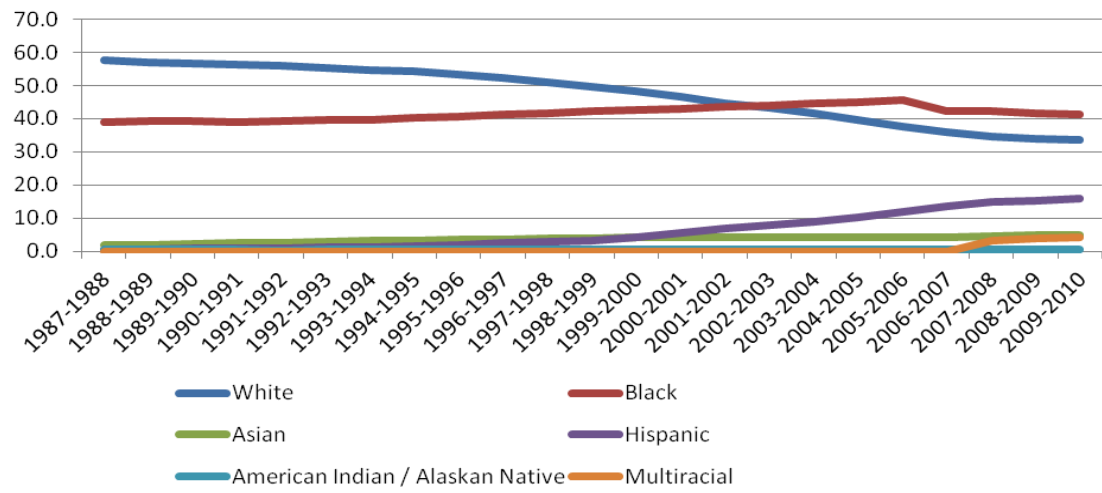


Figure 7: CMS Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity by Academic Year, 1987-2010

\*Ethnicity includes both domestic and foreign born persons.

Sources: National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, and Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (2010).

In this dissertation, I focus on the micro-geographies of immigrant youth accessing the Charlotte labor market. However, it should be noted that this is taking place within a broader local and national political climate that is increasingly hostile toward immigrants. Economic, structural, and social discrimination mainly targets undocumented workers, who are the most vulnerable to exploitation and often live in fear. The volatile economic and political situation, and hostile host society perceptions toward immigrants are expected to continue in the near future. How children of immigrants respond to this – and, in turn, society and policy responds to them – will largely determine the position of a growing number of Hispanics in the US. For these reasons, this research is particularly pressing and taking a multi-scalar perspective is necessary.

Documentation status is often not mentioned in studies on labor market

segregation. In the segmented assimilation literature it may be briefly touched upon but it is rarely a central variable of the study, often because of the lack of (reliable) data on the undocumented populations. Studies on undocumented youth, on the other hand, rarely address the conceptual and theoretical frameworks I am addressing, which is why I see the need to bridge this gap and bring together works from different methodological and disciplinary backgrounds.

Charlotte, North Carolina lends itself well for this case study because of its status as an emerging gateway city (Singer, 2014). A case study approach provides a detailed analysis of why theoretical concepts or previous work on segmented assimilation and immigrant youth in the labor market does or does not apply in the context of this case. It thus allows for the integration of context and causality, understanding that place and context matter. This case study was cross-sectional (i.e. it covers one place at one point in time) and acted to test as well as expand on existing literature. It tested in the sense that determinants influencing job access are incorporated into the study tools (the observational guide and the survey), and it expanded by examining youth's lived experiences and perceptions rather than looking for statistical correlations between independent and dependent variables. Though case study research is criticized for its lack of generalizability, external analytical (rather than statistical) validity of the study is still possible. The results may be transferable to other cities and the in-depth practical knowledge gained through such a case study complements research with a broader scope. This case can thus be considered a paradigmatic one because it can act as a reference point for other cases and highlight more general characteristics of the groups in question (Crowley and Lichter, 2009; Flyvbjerg, 2006).

Another deciding factor is my own familiarity with the city. My experiences studying and working in Charlotte for over four years have helped me gain a quantitative, qualitative, and spatial familiarity with the city, particularly in the areas of immigration and demographic change. For these reasons, Charlotte was an appropriate location to conduct this study. Though I recognize the limitations of only focusing on one place, external analytical (rather than statistical) validity of the study is still possible. Many of the results presented in this dissertation are transferable to other cities and the in-depth practical knowledge gained through such a case study complements research with a broader scope. It provides a detailed analysis of how theoretical, conceptual, and methodological frameworks apply in the context of this case or question, thereby allowing for the integration of context and causality, understanding that place and context matter.

### 3.2 Multi-scalar Perspective

One of the strengths of geographic research is that it takes into account the multiple scales that interact with one another to create and influence social phenomena. I believe a multi-scalar perspective helps understand how immigrant youth access the labor market by providing a framework with which to identify factors impacting a complex socio-spatial dynamic. Institutional and social structures at the federal, state and city level impact individual's lives and everyday experiences. In turn, individuals are involved in place-making practices and shape the sociocultural and economic conditions of their communities.

In this project, I acknowledge the multi-scalar nature of single places and apply the multi-scalar framework (Figure 8) to examine Hispanic immigrant youth's access to

employment. Existing studies, reports, newspaper articles, and my experience working with immigrants informed this diagram. The interview guide was constructed in a way that directly accesses participant's perceptions on the influences federal, state, and local social and institutional factors have in their work experiences (see Appendix). The multi-scalar features therefore also play a role in the development of themes, as presented in the following chapter.

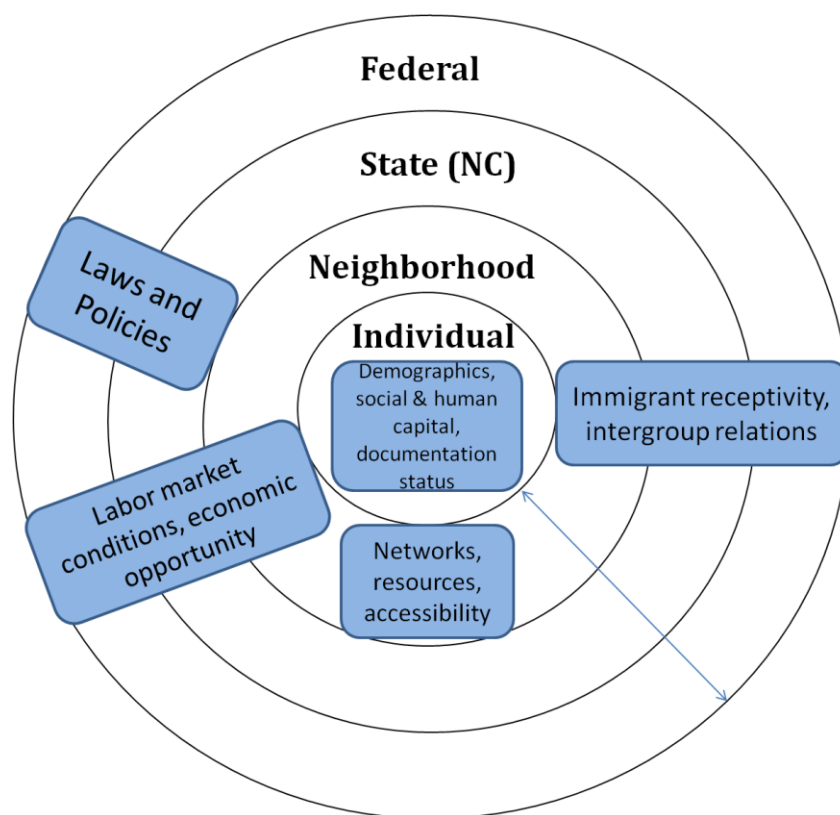


Figure 8: Multi-scalar Conceptual Framework of Influences on Labor Market Access.  
Source: author

The effects of actions and policies are felt across scales and space. “[L]ocal-level institutions mediate the laws of the state, thus shaping the ways in which the integration and adaptation processes are experienced” (p. 12). In turn, individuals and communities

have agency and resilience to ‘push back,’ so there are two-way processes. That said, pressure ‘downwards’ in scale often overpowers individuals, especially marginalized groups. By uniting, individuals increase the chance they can impact larger scales. In the case of Hispanic immigrant youth, we have seen political activist groups emerge. Still, many migrants, particularly those who are unauthorized, remain scared to speak up and continue to live ‘in the shadows.’ Figure 8 is a simplification of reality and was further developed and ‘complexified’ as the study unfolded.

### 3.3 Target Population

Individuals eligible to participate in this study were Hispanic youth ages 16-21 who were not born in the US but came here by the age of 12. Though Rumbaut makes the distinction between the 1.75 generation, i.e. those born abroad and arriving in the US before the age of 6, and the 1.5 generation, i.e. individuals born abroad and arriving in the US between ages 6 and 12, the most recent studies on immigrant youth tend to refer to all individuals who arrived before the age of 13 as the 1.5 generation. For this reason, I included all youth arriving before turning 13, though I recognize that there may be variations in experience between those who arrived as a baby and those who arrived as a 12-year-old. Youth varied in their education level/skill set, neighborhood of residence, and documentation status. Constants were ethnicity (self-identify as Hispanic), born outside the US but arrived by the age of 12, age cohort, and English ability (speaks English).

I chose ages 16-21 because this is the age in which youth are typically transitioning into the labor market. This age cohort includes late adolescents and those in early adulthood. The transition to adulthood can be particularly challenging for minority

youth in low-income neighborhoods due to limited resources. It also incorporates (part of) two transition periods in the lives of immigrant youth that Gonzales (2011, p. 608) refers to: “discovery” (16-18 years), “learning to be illegal” (18 to 24 years). In addition, undocumented youth encounter numerous legal restrictions when accessing the workforce (Abrego and Gonzales, 2010). In Mecklenburg County, there were about 60,000 teens in the 15-19 age range and 64,000 in the 20-24 age category (ACS 2011). 2012 ACS estimates suggest there are about 19,000 Hispanics in Mecklenburg between ages 15 and 24 and 13,500 between 18 and 24. I tried to get a range of perspectives and ages.

For the questionnaires and interviews, I recruited 36 participants, enough to reach ‘saturation’, i.e. no more distinctly new information was being gathered. This is average for case study dissertations and on the high end for action research.<sup>15</sup> The goal was not solely to have a large sample size but to gain depth and explore the complexity of participants’ everyday reality. Of the original 36, 15 started and 13 completed the PAR project.

To participate in the research, each individual signed an informed consent<sup>16</sup> form the day of the questionnaire and interview (incorporated in the Appendix). For individuals aged 16 and 17, an assent form was available and the consent form was sent

---

<sup>15</sup>Mason (2010) conducted a study asking: How many participants are used in PhD (dissertation) studies utilizing qualitative interviews? He found that the mean number of interviews was 23 for action research studies (out of 28 studies; St. Dev. = 18.4), and 36 for case studies (out of 179 studies; St. Dev. = 21.1).

<sup>16</sup> All research materials were approved by UNC Charlotte’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). In addition the study design, procedures, data analysis, confidentiality, and data management, I submitted the following attachments: Human Subjects Training completion certificate; consent forms (English and Spanish); assent form; recruitment flyer (English and Spanish); questionnaire and interview guides; sample PAR project schedule; journaling and mental mapping guidelines; and a signed letter of collaboration from the Latin American Coalition. A waiver of consent was attached to ask recruitment questions to potentially eligible individuals in order to verify if they were eligible for participants.

to their home for their parent/caregiver to sign and return prior to the interview. Spanish versions were available for parents who preferred Spanish over English (all parents preferred the Spanish version). All participants were sent a signed copy of their original consent (and assent, when applicable) form for their own records.

I acknowledge the limitation of grouping all Hispanic youth together. I recognize that there are cultural and other differences between people from different countries and regions that are relevant to this study. For example, Jargowsky (2009) found that Central Americans and South Americans tended to spatially assimilate but that Mexicans were more likely to remain living in low-income neighborhoods over time in the US. That said, Mexicans are disproportionately represented among the undocumented population so maybe limited opportunities have more to do with documentation status or other factors than with their country of origin. Grouping all Hispanics together in this study flows from my experiences working with Latinos in the US and my hypothesis that being documented or undocumented matters more for job access than country of origin. This hypothesis was tested in this study by asking participants about both factors. Though this allowed me to open up the study to a broader group of Hispanics, I had a disproportionate number of Mexican participants. I speculate this is because the majority of foreign-born Hispanics in Charlotte are from Mexico (according to PUMS data, 66.1% of foreign-born Latino youth ages 16-21 in the Charlotte metropolitan area were from Mexico. In my sample, 25 out of 36 (69.4%) were from Mexico), and there are less from South America as there are from Central America.

Another non-representational aspect of my sample is the overrepresentation of youth who were still in school and experienced with activism and leadership. This group,

however, acted as key informants, sharing information about other youth in their schools and neighborhoods not as likely to be motivated to participate in a study or be as involved in their communities. Within the sample there were other differences among participants particularly with regard to their level of awareness of topics being explored in the study and their ability to express themselves and offer critical societal reflection. Variations in work experiences and perceptions offered further insight into the individual differences that existed between group members.

### 3.4 Descriptive Quantitative Data

Though the methods in this dissertation are mostly qualitative, I supplemented the questionnaires, interviews, PAR project, and observation findings with quantitative data for descriptive and contextual means. There are quantitative components incorporated into the dissertation prior to and after the interviews. Since there is no data set available that is directly relevant to my research question and discloses documentation status of the individual, I used US Census American Community Survey (ACS)<sup>17</sup> and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Quality of Life Study<sup>18</sup> data as matter of background, and use the interview questions to gather and link to quantitative data. Initially, I looked at race/ethnicity (Hispanic), foreign-born, household income, employment, and commuter times by census tract for Mecklenburg County and mapped this data using Geographic Information

---

<sup>17</sup> The US Census Bureau selects a random sample of 3.5 million addresses to be included in the ACS. The ACS includes the basic short-form questions of the Census survey, as well as more detailed questions about demographic, housing, social, and economic characteristics. This information is used widely for research, planning, and the distribution of \$400 billion per year in federal and state funds. See also: [https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/programs-surveys/acs/about/ACS\\_Information\\_Guide.pdf](https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/programs-surveys/acs/about/ACS_Information_Guide.pdf).

<sup>18</sup> The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Quality of Life Study offers social, crime, physical, economic and environmental conditions in Charlotte's neighborhoods. Data comes from sources such as the US Census, ACS, Mecklenburg County Department of Health, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. See also: [http://charmeck.org/qol/documents/charlotte%20mecklenburg%20quality%20of%20life%20study%20faq%20\(3\).pdf](http://charmeck.org/qol/documents/charlotte%20mecklenburg%20quality%20of%20life%20study%20faq%20(3).pdf).



Systems (GIS). GIS are a combination of hardware, software, and practices that merge cartography, statistical analysis, and database technology to map and analyze spatial data.

Moreover, I gathered publically available education data from Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS), Central Piedmont Community Colleges and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte to provide an overview of Hispanic enrollment. Though this data does not specifically capture 1.5-generation Hispanic immigrant youth, it provides a contextual overview of the demographic, neighborhood, educational, and economic conditions in which this group is living.

In addition, I gathered individual-level Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) data on all Hispanic youth ages 16-21 in the Charlotte-Gastonia-Rock Hill metropolitan area (this was the smallest geographic unit available). I compared foreign-born and US-born members of this group and selected specific variables that are relevant to this study, including household income, citizenship status, school attendance, and employment status.

Using participants' addresses, I obtained information about their zip codes, census tracts, and Neighborhood Statistical Areas (NSAs) from the US Census bureau and Charlotte Quality of Life Study (2012) to provide an overview of residential characteristics of the participants. Subsequently, I utilized Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to visualize this data and overlay youth quotes about their area of residence. This is a form of qualitative GIS. GIS originated as a quantitative method of geography to study and visualize spatial relations. Qualitative GIS can incorporate data of the urban environment as well as behavioral attributes (e.g. Dunn, 2007; Cochran, 2009; (Kwan and Ding, 2008; McLafferty, 1995; Blumenberg and Smart, 2010). Feminist

geographers such as (Blumenberg & Smart, 2010; Bolt et al, 1998; Boswell and Cruz-Baez, 1997), building on the theoretical gender geography work by Haraway (1988) and Ramey (2013), advocated the use of mixed-methods and combining quantitative and qualitative information. For instance, mapping women's life paths in space-time has helped study local labor markets, labor segmentation and discrimination, and other relationships between gender, place, and work. By attaching participant quotes about their neighborhood to maps with their neighborhood data, we gain a more holistic view of the area.

### 3.5 Mixed Qualitative Methods

As illustrated in Figure 9 and explained in this chapter, my case study approach is operationalized through a mixed methodology designed to best answer the core research questions for the project.

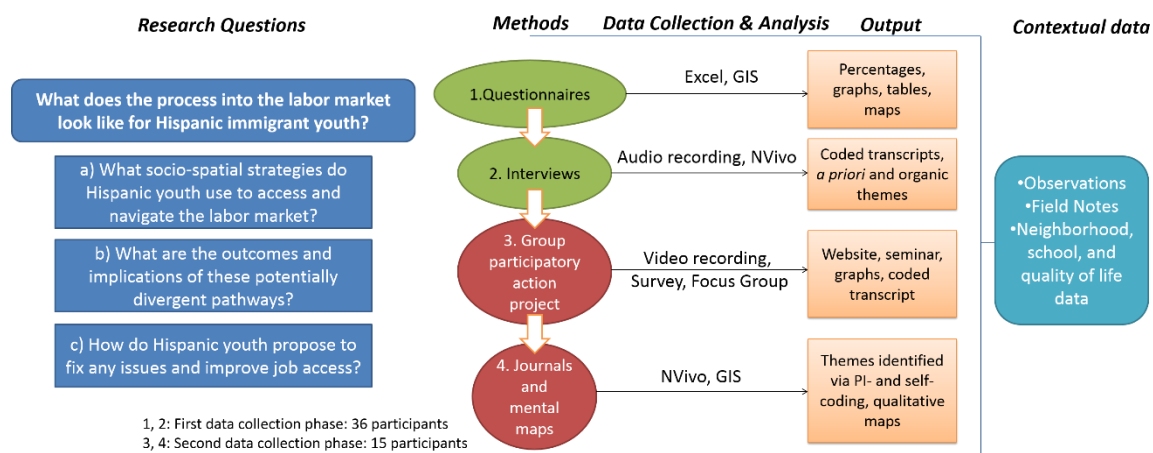


Figure 9: Overview of Research Questions, Methods, and Analysis. Source: author.

Different qualitative methods were deliberately chosen to answer the questions based on the specific forms of data they helped gather, verify and analyze and because of

their respective strengths in interpreting and understanding human behavior and perception. Combining them addressed the limitations associated with a single methods approach and allowed for triangulation of results. Emerging as a response to criticism of the rigor of qualitative approaches, triangulation enhances the depth and credibility of the research by allowing for corroboration and cross-verification of results gathered by different methodologies, researchers, or information sources. By answering the same question using different techniques and seeing if they deliver similar results, the researcher can overlap the findings and improve the study's validity (Hemming, 2008). In staying true to the triangulation approach, my data analysis process was cyclical. In other words, analysis was not left till the end and new data was continuously compared to previously collected data throughout the research process (Cahill, 2007a).

Qualitative methods and critical grounded theories are commonly used to augment quantitative findings and to research experience and perception among individuals and groups. I use a mixed-methods qualitative approach that combines interpretive (interviews and questionnaires) and action modes of research. In this research, while it is essential to use quantitative research to show, for example, how job access and choice remain stratified by socio-economic status and race/ethnicity qualitative methods shed light onto why those patterns exist. What are their barriers to and support systems in pursuing employment? How do individuals socially and spatially navigate the job search and application process? By providing insight into the causal factors of underrepresentation, these studies can supplement quantitative data and suggest avenues for intervention.

Using primarily a qualitative approach, I complement quantitative data on

immigrant youth, which is often limited because it undercounts or fails to identify non-citizens and those who are living in the US without legal documentation. In part, this is because those who are undocumented are less likely to participate in surveys such as the US Census, but also because documentation status is typically not asked, and thus we are unable to distinguish groups of different statuses. As such, my qualitative approach helps illuminate this hidden population – in our communities and our datasets. Furthermore, interpretive qualitative methods such as interviews and questionnaires, allow the researcher to access a more multi-faceted, contextual, and nuanced reality of people's everyday geographies and experiences. In this study they served well as a way to explore the multi-scalar dynamics of structure and agency, and reach a difficult to access population.

Though some quantitative data were incorporated in this project, the main mixed-methods research refers to the mixing of different qualitative, interpretive, or participatory methods. Mixed-methods researchers acknowledge that no single method can fully answer the complex nature of our social questions and that each method has its limitations. A mixed-methods approach can therefore: a) make up for the limitations of each separate technique; b) help answer different types of questions; c) allow for triangulation of results. Consequently, it can improve the depth, breadth, validity, and credibility of the research.

Though mixed-methods research can be time-consuming and resource intensive, it is becoming more commonplace. For example, Hemming (2008) explains how, in children's geographies, participant observations and semi-structured interviews are often paired with participatory methods (diagramming, photographs, drawings) to investigate

children's perceptions and experiences. In an empirical study on children, health and exercise in the everyday spaces of primary school, he illustrates the challenges and benefits of combining methods from participatory and interpretive approaches through triangulation. Similarly, Aldrich and Waldinger (1990) conducted a study on young people's movements in time and space in Accra, Ghana using group discussions, oral life stories, lifelines, written diaries, photo-diaries, and participant observation. Though challenging to compare and synthesize all the findings, combining these methods can help capture the diversity and complexity of youth experiences in the present as well as longitudinal processes of transition. Lastly, Iosifides (2003) employed several qualitative methods, combining semi-structured interviews with informational questionnaires, in-depth interviews and participant observations to obtain information and data on processes, meanings, mechanisms, and structures of inclusion and exclusion of immigrant experiences in Athens, Greece. These studies informed and guided my methodological decisions.

Examples of mixed-methods studies that focus on Latinos include an 18-month ethnographic project with Latino youth activists in California included life-history interviews, participant observations, monitoring of a statewide campaign to pass the federal DREAM act (Negrón-Gonzales, 2013). A combination of multiple methods was strategically chosen to "capture the multi-faceted, complex realities of these young people's lives" (p. 3). The author reflects on his positionality as an insider and an outsider to the subjects of his study and how he had to remind students of his role as a researcher and not just a political ally. I can learn from this reflexivity as well as the approaches he used to engage with undocumented youth. Similarly, Hill and Torres (2010)

methodologies are one-third quantitative and two-thirds qualitative, utilizing open-ended interviews, focus groups, case studies, and participant observations to gain rich descriptive data about Latino students and families.

Another ethnographic case study of undocumented migrants was conducted in Athens, Georgia (Aleixo et al, 2014). A combination of interviews, structured surveys, and participant observations were employed to provide insight into the everyday lives of immigrants. The author discusses how she gained access to a group of Mexican families and gained their trust over time, allowing her to collect the data for this project. Included in the write-up are detailed observations of the lives and livelihoods of the Mexican families in a low-income apartment complex. Research participants talked about crossing the border, forging legal documents, and working under other people's names. Some men and women were employed at the poultry processing plant and other factories, whereas others worked in the informal economy, providing child care, selling convenience items or meals. Unique to this publication is the author's elaborate discussion of her methods and her participation in the community.

Continuing in the US South, Hernández-León and Zuñiga (2002) combined hundreds of hours of participant observation; two-dozen individual interviews with residents of different social, ethnic, and occupational backgrounds; surveys; and action methods to analyze and improve Mexican immigrant communities in the US South and their social capital. Different methods collect different types of information and thereby complement one another in uncovering greater profundity of the topic of interest. Oftentimes, the research process and outcomes can help empower participants, improve communities, and inform policy makers and practitioners.

For his dissertation, titled *Born in the shadows: The uncertain futures of the children of unauthorized Mexican migrants*, Gonzales (2008a) conducted 102 life-history interviews with 1.5 generation and second generation Mexicans aged 18 - 36 in the Los Angeles Metropolitan area. Interviews were complemented with three years of participant observations, historical data analysis, Census data analysis, and interaction with teachers, community workers, university administrators, and elected officials. He looked specifically at the following neighborhood data: demographic composition by age, race, and national origin; average rent and household size; education levels and occupation; income levels and sources of income; labor force participation rates and size; and unemployment rates. To gain access to his “hidden” target population, Gonzales volunteered with community organizations. In order to also capture the stories of those youth who were not connected to such resources, he used the snowball method. Though snowball sampling has been critiqued by not being representative, the “lack of legal status” often makes unauthorized youth “wary, uncooperative, and difficult to locate,” creating “difficulties in applying a random sampling frame” (p. 135). Of the 102 respondents, 51 were male and 51 female. They represented three main categories: 1) 1.5 generation who entered without papers and are still unauthorized (36 participants); 2) 1.5 generation who entered without papers but are now documented (33 participants); 3) second generation with undocumented parents (33 participants). My study builds on work by Gonzales but focuses specifically on labor market access, adds a spatial perspective throughout the project, incorporates action-based research, and looks at a new immigrant gateway as opposed to a well-established one. This allows for some interesting comparisons and new perspectives to emerge.

I engaged in what is referred to by qualitative researchers as “thick description.” Recognizing that there is often confusion about what the term means exactly and how to put it into practice, Ponterotto (2006) provides an overview of the evolution and meaning of “thick description.” Though Geertz’ 1973 *The Interpretation of Cultures* is typically cited as the first source of the term, the concept had been discussed by Ryle (1949, 1971) earlier. In *The Dictionary of Human Geography* (Gregory et al, 2009, p. 753) we find that “thick” – as opposed to “thin” – narrative refers to “rich ethnographic descriptions based on intensive investigations of informants’ action and their interpretation of their own practices placed within their cultural context”. In other words, multiple layers of meaning and context are provided. These “structures of meaning” are “historically specific, fluid, fragmentary, negotiated and situational” (*idem*, referring to Geertz’ work). Beyond recounting what takes place, “thick description” adds thoughts, emotions, social relationships, and motivations of the research participants’ experiences (Denzin, 1989; Holloway, 1997; Schwandt, 2001).

The following sub-sections describe each of the methods I employed. The methods used and the combination of methods were informed by similar research cited in the previous paragraphs.

### 3.5.1 Questionnaires

Questionnaires pose standardized, formally structured questions to a group of individuals, and can be qualitative, quantitative or mixed. The questions must be carefully and thoughtfully devised and pre-tested to ensure the survey relates to your broader research question(s) and is appropriate for your target group (Anderson, 2005). If used as the sole data collection method, researchers usually aim for a high number of surveys so



they can make general statements about the population. However, when used in combination with other methods – as in this project – the focus lies more on how data collected through the questionnaires can be triangulated and further examined using other methods. Since this latter approach is more focused on depth, one does not need a high N per se.

In this study, questionnaires are employed to gather factual and close-ended information from participants. Using guidelines presented by McGuirk and O'Neill (2010), I structured the survey as a combination of qualitative and quantitative questions to be able to do different forms of analysis. Four types of questions were included: attributes (characteristics, demographics), behavior, attitudes, and beliefs. The questions were directly informed by the literature on this topic. Studies on immigrant youth discuss in their framework how academic trajectories are determined by a combination of individual efforts and characteristics but also by the broader social and educational context at multiple levels (e.g. household, neighborhood, state). Since the literature suggests that factors of age, gender, length of time in the US, immigration status, race/ethnicity, economic status, and neighborhood of residence may add multiple challenges and disadvantages, and that this may play out differently in new vs. traditional gateway cities, the questionnaire touched upon these variables and the interview dug deeper into the stories behind the answers. Given that the questions are more descriptive, they provided demographic information and a general introduction of what the process into the labor market looks like for Hispanic immigrant youth.

Recognizing both strengths and challenges for this group is important and acknowledged in the questionnaire. I kept the language relatively simple (e.g. no jargon)

and condensed it to three pages (see Appendix). After signing the informed consent form, participants filled out the questionnaire, with me present in the room in case they had questions. Once the questionnaire was completed, the participant submitted their responses to me and I took a brief look at the responses in preparation for the interview to see if anything stood out and what I could follow up on in the interview. I subsequently conducted the interview, which builds on the questionnaire. Data were summarized using percentages, graphs, tables, and pie-charts using Excel and SPSS the outcomes of which are found in subsequent chapters.

### 3.5.2 Interviews

Interviews pose semi-structured or structured questions to an individual, and can be used to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. They can be helpful research tools in providing insights into relevant social trends, processes, values, attitudes and interpretations. The guidelines are similar to those of questionnaires with the main difference that interviews allow for longer, more detailed answers and story-telling. As demonstrated in the previous case studies, interviews pair well with questionnaires and observational modes in studying people's perceptions because surveys and interviews capture the direct words of the participants but respondents may provide a more stereotyped view than is actually the case when they are observed (Cotton et al, 2010).

I used semi-structured interviews to gain answers to my research questions in a more detailed manner (see guide in Appendix). They allowed me to follow-up with the information provided in the questionnaire and compare experiences between individuals accessing the labor market. Therefore, they provided contextual information to help answer research question a): What socio-spatial strategies do Hispanic youth use to

access and navigate the labor market? The interview results also offered insight into outcomes of potentially divergent pathways (question b). Furthermore, there was room to touch upon the third research question and inquire what strategies Hispanic youth would craft to improve job access and position in the labor market both for themselves and their peers (c) – this was further investigated in the participatory components. Given that the interview highlighted the subjective perceptions of the youth, findings allowed me to discuss how youth in my sample reflect or challenge what the literature is stating.

Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed using Olympus transcription software. NVivo qualitative analysis software assisted in the organization and analysis of the transcriptions. In this process, I coded and identified *a priori* and organic themes. The interviews and questions were designed to elicit detailed and valuable responses and were structured with several *a priori* themes in mind. *A priori* themes are pre-identified in the research framework, questions, and literature review as impacting (Hispanic) youth labor market access and trajectories and are therefore likely to come up in the interviews. Organic themes, on the other hand, emerged from the qualitative data analysis as ‘new’ information. *A priori* themes reflect the multi-scalar framework and include:

1. The impacts of documentation status on accessing the labor market – is there a ‘legal mismatch’ in the jobs youth are qualified for and those they are able to access?
2. Divergent pathways or segmented assimilation – Are some youth doing well in terms of getting the jobs they want, whereas others are less able to access (desirable) employment?
3. The impacts of education level on accessing work – Is there a ‘skills mismatch’?

4. The influence of neighborhood of residence on where youth access work and what type of work they can access – Is there a ‘spatial mismatch’ or examples of spatial inclusion/exclusion?
5. The impact of federal, state, and local-level policies on individual-level labor market chances and experiences – multi-scalar connections, disconnect between scales, structural inclusion/exclusion.
6. Neighborhood- and household-based resources that help or hinder youth in accessing work – social networks, social capital.
7. The context of Charlotte as a new immigrant gateway and how that impacts immigrant youth experiences.

Themes overlap with different scales. For instance, documentation status is an individual status but it is ‘created’ at the federal level. Similarly, policies and programs can be at the national, state, or local level.

The process of accessing the labor market is an inherently spatial process – think of the vast majority of workers who commute to work, the modes of transit they use, and the time they spend in transit. I annotated maps with qualitative information the youth provide about spaces within Charlotte to illustrate the spatiality of youth labor market experiences, and compare movement through and perceptions of space for youth with different documentation statuses.

As I analyzed and wrote up the results, I stayed true to the practice of “think description” and the “voice” of the participants by incorporating “long quotes from the participants or excerpts of interviewer-interview dialogue” (Ponterotto, 2006, p. 547). All of these quotes are verbatim. Parallel to the content analysis, I reflect on the process of

recruiting participants, conducting the interviews, and how data collection played out.

**Questionnaire and Interview Sample:** The original sample (N=36) consisted of 21 females and 15 males with an average age of 17.8 years at the time of the questionnaire (Figure 10). 24 had DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), 7 were permanent residents, 1 was a US citizen, 1 had TPS (Temporary Protected Status), 2 were undocumented without DACA, and 1 participant was unsure about her immigration status (I later found out she has a U visa). One of the undocumented participants had recently married a US citizen and was in the process of applying for papers. The other undocumented student was considering applying for DACA. Besides Charlotte, participants have lived in Texas, the Northeast, Florida, and other places in the South. Most consider Charlotte ‘home.’

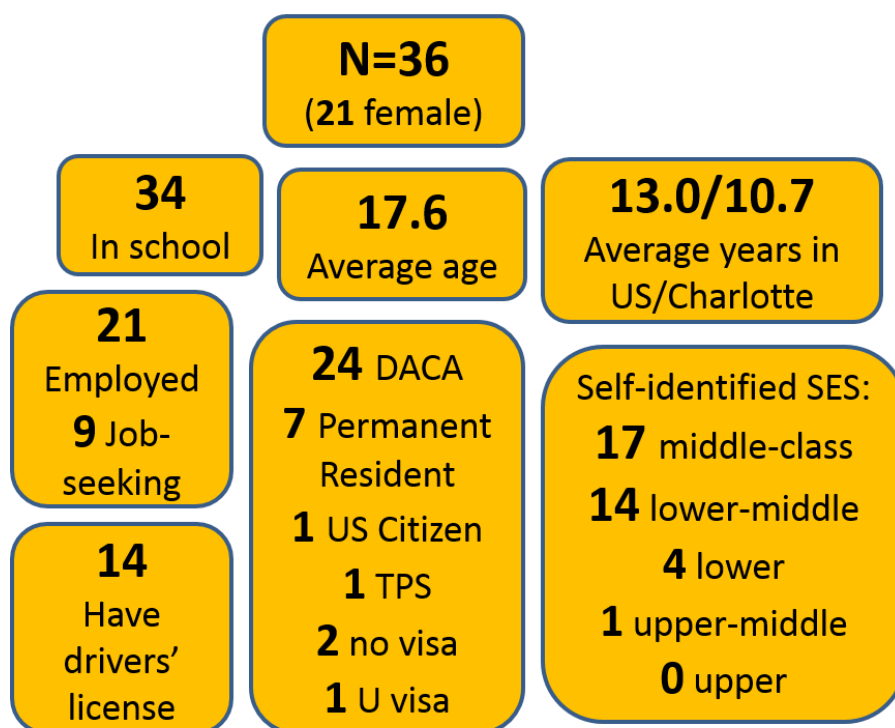


Figure 10: Background information about the study participants

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Age in years	36	16	21	17.8	2.0
Years in the US	36	4.0	19.0	13.0	2.4
Years in Charlotte	36	2.0	16.0	10.7	3.8
No. of previous jobs	29	0	8	2.2	2.3

Figure 10: Background information about the study participants (continued)



Figure 11: Participants' and their parents' countries of birth (N=36)

The PAR group (N=15) consisted of 9 females and 6 males (see Section 3.5.3 for details of PAR component of this study). Four were enrolled at a 4-year college, 1 at community college, and 1 worked full-time (high school graduate). The remaining 9 were in high school. Interestingly, all were born in Mexico. They lived in various parts of Charlotte and had a range of experiences, immigration statuses, and personalities. In general, they wanted to participate in the project to contribute to their community and be involved with positive change. Several were particularly interested in also learning about research.

Table 1: Parents and family background of study participants

Family compositions	The majority of the participants (22 out of 36) live with both their parents. 5 live with their mother and step-father, 1 lives with father and step-mother. 4 live with only one parent (mother). For those living without any parent, 1 lives with roommates (in college), 1 lives with sister's family, 1 lives with husband and father-in-law, and 1 lives with an older brother. 24 live with at least one sibling. Other household members include: an uncle and a nephew. Household sizes range from 2 to 8.
Mother's occupation	Ama de casa (stay-at-home mother), custodian, cleaning business, journalist, laundry/cleaning supervisor, Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS), waitress, cook, secretary, banquet server, medical assistant, dry cleaner, housekeeping, clinic laboratory, busser, painter.
Father's occupation	Fleet manager, construction, energy resources, catering chef, truck driver, custom cabinetry, painting, busboy, fixing cars, contractor, factory worker, pool maker, maintenance, painter, 'anything and everything', Compare foods employee, manual labor.

The parents' occupations (Table 1) are stated as described by the youth themselves. Many of these jobs are in sectors where other first-generation Latino immigrants work. Though some parents did not receive schooling beyond elementary school, Figure 12 shows that most parents have a high school or a college degree, with mothers being less likely to have attended college than fathers. Given that 26 of the 36 participants (72.2%) are DACAmented or undocumented, it is likely that their parents also lack legal papers. As such, they end up working lower-wage jobs, regardless of their educational attainment. Parents with a higher educational attainment are more likely to have children with a higher educational attainment. That said, the process of accessing higher education in their countries of origin may be very different than in the US, meaning they study participants' parents who have (some) college experience may not necessarily be better prepared to support their children in their education than parents with a lower educational attainment.

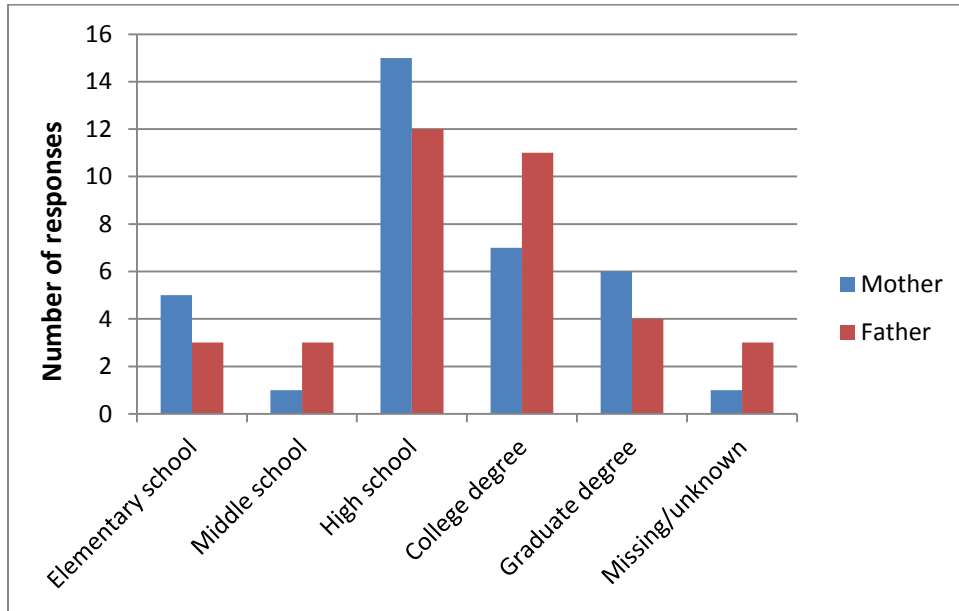


Figure 12: Participants' parental educational attainment

Studies also argue that immigrant parents who speak English well are more able to support their children than those who do not speak English. As illustrated in Figure 13, study participants' fathers are more likely to speak English fluently than their mothers, possibly because of their labor market involvements. Almost 64% of mothers speak no or basic English.



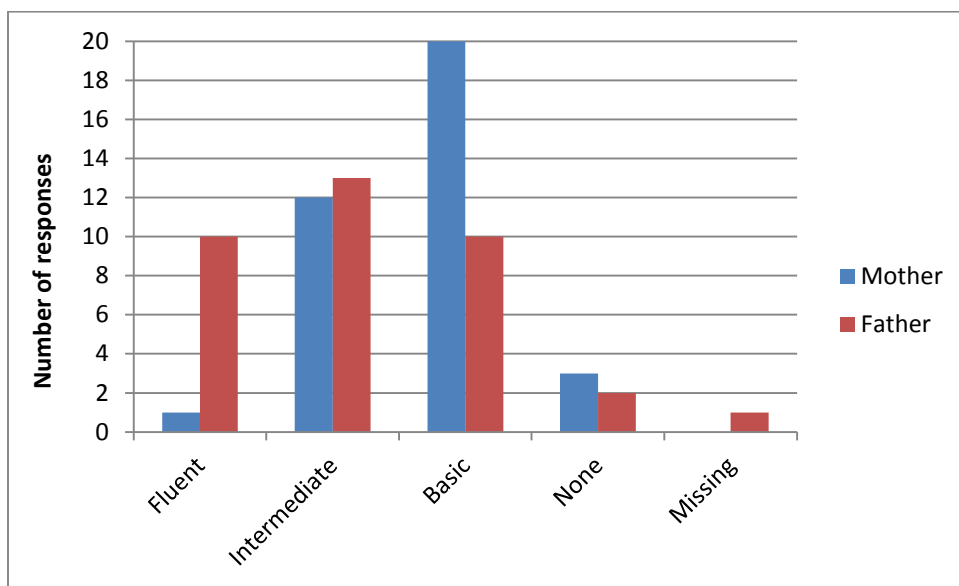


Figure 13: English proficiency among participants' parents

### 3.5.3. Participatory Action Research Project

Questionnaires and interviews were the first phrase of data collection; an action-based project was the second phase. Action Research (AR) was initiated in 1946 by Lewin who tested theory on improving intergroup relations through practical interventions. A reaction to top-down ‘traditional’ ways of doing research, action methods are non-linear, with cycles of action and reflection built into the research process. Action researchers believe that it is our responsibility to not only critically analyze oppressed groups and power structures but also to use that information to help address these inequalities. AR is “oriented towards bringing about change, often involving respondents in the process of investigation. Researchers are actively involved with the situation or phenomenon being studied” (Assudani, 2009, p. 545). Though AR is often time-consuming and people-demanding, and issues of power differentials remain, it has been offered as a vehicle for social change via research.

Participatory research (PR) is used to describe a variety of community-based

approaches to the creation of knowledge. Researchers - focusing on the connections between action, research, and politics – act as agents of change in the process while the research is being done. PR is rooted in Freire’s critical pedagogy on power relations and the creation of knowledge, as well as Marxism, critical race theory, and feminist philosophy. According to Hall (2005), Borda was the first to use the phrase “participatory action research” in the late 1970s. In 1977, Hall and this international team produced a list of characteristics that defined PR, including: involving a range of marginalized groups of people, full and active community participation in the entire research process, the researcher as a participant and a learner, and the use of accurate and authentic analysis of social reality to improve the lives of the people themselves in ways that mobilize them for self-reliant development. This was a truly international collaboration, with network nodes in North America, Asian, Africa, Europe, and Latin America.

Post-interview, each participant was invited to become involved in a participatory action component of the research. Fifteen participants signed up for the PAR project, 13 of which completed the full project. We met weekly at the Latin American Coalition (LAC) for three months (January – April, 2015). Each session lasted approximately two hours and was video recorded to allow for more reliable observation data. Snacks and beverages were provided at each session.

In response to the barriers to labor market access and the strengths Latino immigrant youth bring to the labor market, as identified by youth in the interviews, the PAR participants developed a project specifically addressing question c) How do Hispanic youth propose to fix any issues and improve job access? The schedule was carefully and intentionally designed to answer the research question and develop a

tangible product that helps them improve their chances in the labor market and may also benefit their peers. Their ability to work in a team and communicate effectively – skills required by most jobs – was also developed.

It was essential that the participants got to know each other in the beginning in an informal, welcoming environment so they would feel more comfortable around each other. Therefore, the initial first meeting was focused on getting to know each other and deciding on an idea for the project based on data collected thus far in the study. Developing trust within the group and with the researcher is pivotal, explain Aleixo et al. (2014). This involves emphasizing confidentiality and creating a safe, open space that encourages respect and collaboration. In this first meeting, I also explained the PAR philosophy, recognizing that the ideas behind PAR might challenge what youth think research is and who researchers or ‘experts’ are. “By encouraging more knowledge creation at the community level, we could dispel the myth that only ‘experts’ can conduct research” (Aleixo et al., 2014, p. 366). This advice is echoed by Cahill (2007a, p. 301) who asserts that taking the time to develop research proficiency among all participants gives participants confidence and “helps to equalize the power relationship between the facilitator and participants (and between participants with varying levels of experience) in the PAR process.” As the primary investigator, I positioned myself as a facilitator and collaborator. The youth were very receptive to the project and eager to contribute. During the meetings, I asked open-ended and follow-up questions, and modeled active listening, making sure not to dominate the discussions.

In preparation for the PAR project I engaged in a week-long Critical Participatory Action Research Summer Institute at the City University of New York (CUNY) Graduate

Center through the Public Science Project. I also took advice from other PAR scholars and their work (e.g. Baird et al., 2008; Bates, 2006; Kindon et al, 2007; McIntyre, 2003; Sutherland and Cheng, 2009), such as involving the group in deciding on the form of the project; acknowledging my positionality; not making any promises; practicing honesty, integrity, compassion, and respect; and being flexible to changes or unexpected turns (Baird et al., 2008). The schedule was flexible enough to allow changes based on the development and inputs from the participants. For instance, the group decided to meet an additional time in order to prepare for our seminar, and we attended a professional development off-site event together after connecting with a local business leader.

After a series of activities and discussions about the interview data and research topics, participants identified the lack of job-related information as one of the key common challenges they face to successfully transitioning from school to work. For that reason, they chose to develop a website for immigrant youth with job-related information: [www.YouthAdaptNC.com](http://www.YouthAdaptNC.com) (the youth came up with this name, Youth ADAPT NC. ADAPT stands for: Always Developing by Acting, Preparing, and Transforming).

Participants conducted short surveys with their peers at school to identify what immigrant youth wish to learn about. Together, we devised a few questions and youth were trained on how to conduct these short surveys. The results of these surveys were used to design the outline for the website. One of the participants created our team logo, which was used for the website, T-shirts, and stickers. Social media ([www.facebook.com/youthadaptnc](http://www.facebook.com/youthadaptnc)) and local media (radio, newspaper) were used to promote the seminar and website.

Participants worked in teams on sections of the website so that each individual developed expertise on a certain topic, e.g. resume writing or preparing for job interviews. Youth obtained information for the website through online research and interviewing professionals. They also participated in a seminar with a local business leader about leadership and professional development, and were invited to a subsequent event in the city with diverse local leaders.

In addition to the website, the group and I planned a youth seminar in Charlotte, NC. About 40 people attended, including local media representatives. Youth attendees learned from an experienced panel about how to set themselves up for success in their careers. The seminar also functioned as a space to launch our website.

During our final PAR meeting, we reflected on the project's outcomes and the process. Each participant filled out an evaluation survey and subsequently they all engaged in an evaluation focus group. Participants felt accomplished. Through this project they wished to inspire other youth and let them know they have opportunities. Parallel to helping others, this study provided them the opportunity to develop their own leadership, communication, and collaboration skills. The process and results of the project were analyzed using video recordings, field notes, and youth evaluations.

Video recording the sessions provided the opportunity of watching the sessions after they took place, allowing for a more reliable and comprehensive analysis of the research process than depending on my own (post-session) notes. Beyond the reliability of participant observations, I believe benefited how I facilitated future group sessions, during this study and beyond. A Latino undergraduate research assistant took observation notes based on the video recordings of each meeting. We debriefed each meeting in

preparation for the upcoming ones, allowing for ongoing reflexivity and changes to the project as needed.

Like other participatory researchers, Hall (2005) grappled with questions about the role of the Academy in PR and the status of knowledge generated in a PR process. There appears to be a common and ongoing frustration among participatory researchers that it is difficult to work in the communities from a university base because the academy uses and creates knowledge differently than communities and workplace situations. Consequently, the university may not always recognize the rigor of collaborative research. At the same time, academics are expected to publish and are financially rewarded for this process, whilst collaborating community partners are not. Though Hall provides no solutions for this situation, these comments may help prepare future participatory researchers for the contradictions and self-conflict they may face. Also, despite these challenges, PR is increasingly being taught at universities around the world since the 1990s.

Action-oriented approaches have also found their way into geographic research. Action-oriented social geographies that deal with engagement with individuals, groups and communities beyond the traditional research encounter are re-emerging in human geography (Pain, 2004). These studies cover a range of topics (e.g. health, education, urban labor markets, and multiculturalism) and social groups (e.g. immigrants, ethnic minorities, women, youth, and people with disabilities). Still, geographers may not agree on what the best way to 'act' is and how to best make a difference to 'real' people. A key question for social geographers is to whom research is 'relevant' – is it about servicing and informing powerful groups and making policies work better, or about representing

and empowering marginalized people? While this is an ongoing debate, Pain argues both can occur alongside one another rather than acting as opposing opinions. The diverse modes that fall into this category of action-oriented research include: activist, participatory, and policy research. Activism as an explicit strategy and outcome of research, and exists on a continuum. Participatory research is undertaken collaboratively with and for the individuals, groups or communities who are its subject. Often seen as the reactionary cousin of activist and participatory research, policy research can also be a viable strategy in critical action research.

Though emphasis is often heavily on the research process of PAR, it is also important to acknowledge the outcomes of this research. Outcomes may be in a written, visual, and/or oral form. For example, Aleixo et al. (2014) developed the Youth Friendly Health Services project in which Vancouver youth engaged in community mapping to help make health clinics and services more ‘youth friendly.’ Community mapping is a story-telling technique that allows groups to draw, write, and express some aspect of local knowledge (Bacallao and Smokowski, 2005). As part of their methodology, youth created maps with rich and layered descriptions of their perspectives of the local environment. The youth researchers decided to use the mapping results to create a health service evaluation survey. Over a one-month period, the youth researchers visited one to three clinics (for a specific health concern or a general check-up), after which they completed the survey. They found that the “survey tool simply did not represent the emotional and lived dimensions of those experiences” (p. 367) so the team decided to also create a zine, a self-published small booklet, to tell their stories. In this zine, they included a photo-essay of photos and quotes expressing their impression of the health clinics, and a set of

health clinic ratings. The youth presented the project results at a local Child and Youth Health Conference. Interestingly, the survey they initially created turned out to be too narrow and too quantitative, whereas the zine allowed for more dynamic and youth-friendly expressions that honored individuals' perspectives.

Another example is a PAR study facilitated by Cahill (2007a) titled *Makes Me Mad: Stereotypes of Young Urban Womyn of Color*. Cahill partnered with six women aged 16 – 22 living in the Lower East Side in New York City (the 'Fed up Honeys'). The project was initially broadly introduced to the women to study the 'everyday lives of young women in the city.' The participants decided they wanted to focus the research on the (mis)representations of young people of color. Mental mapping and journaling were two of the techniques used to collect data. Research products that were developed included a website, a sticker campaign, and a report.

Cahill has written extensively about participatory research (Cahill, 2004, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, 2010; Cahill et al, 2007). In *Doing research with young people: Participatory research and the rituals of collective work* (2007a) she advocates why it is important we promote the inclusion of youth in research and social change in geography and the social sciences. Youth are viewed as assets, change agents, (upcoming) community leaders, and 'the future,' yet are usually excluded from policy and planning discussions. They are also capable of being co-researchers, as demonstrated for instance in PAR project *Dreaming of No Judgment: Mi Pleito Against Stereotypes* about the emotional and economic impacts of stereotypes on immigrant communities (Cahill, 2010). Cahill worked together with a group of Latino immigrant youth in Salt Lake City, Utah, to examine the everyday lived experiences of anti-immigrant rhetoric and



legislation at the federal, state and local level. The youth researchers conducted two focus groups with young people of different racial/ethnic background about their experiences of stereotyping. The previously mentioned studies informed and inspired my PAR project.

Having experience with participatory research and action research projects, I am familiar with the advantages and disadvantages they bring. In this dissertation, I further the development of mixed-methods and participatory approaches by exploring how they can be used when working with youth, and the level of success in a relatively short-term, no/low-budget, one-researcher design. PAR is becoming more recognized as a way to do research *with* rather than *about* marginalized communities. I applied techniques that tap into locally situated knowledge (Haraway, 1991; Rose, 1997; Soule and Edmonson, 2001) and give voice to the research participants. As a participatory study, the process of the research is just as important as – or in fact part of – the final outcomes.

Acknowledging this – and my own positionality as a researcher – allows me to add to a body of literature that is more transparent and reflective about the research process, challenges of certain techniques, and the subjectivity of the researcher.

#### 3.5.4. Journaling and Mental Mapping

For one month (during the PAR project), the youth were asked to journal and draw a mental map once a week about thoughts, travels, or experiences related to work and job search. The data contributes to our understanding of the socio-spatial strategies and perceptions of the youth as they navigate the labor market in a different form than the interviews and questionnaires. Participants were provided guidelines in a hand-out to structure their journaling and mapping (see Appendix).

The journaling provided textual data that directly reflects the everyday life

experiences and intimate thoughts of youth in relation to accessing the labor market.

Moreover, the process in itself can be beneficial for participants and the PAR group project:

“writing and reflecting in personal journals (...) offered co-researchers a private space/time for reflection, and the opportunity to develop their own perspective on an issue or topic (e.g. ‘what I like in my community’) or to reflect upon what we had (or hadn’t) accomplished during the day. Writing can be an important generative and productive process through which one can start to make sense of feelings and experiences. This is particularly important for young people who may be experimenting with different identities; providing a space to ‘try on’ different selves and to re-write one’s personal narrative. It is a constructive space for participants to formulate their perspectives and in so doing develop their critical consciousness. Writing thus also served as a preparation for public participation. We frequently shared journal excerpts with each other. This was an effective way to start a group discussion, compare perspectives, jump-start a decision-making process, or bring closure to the day. It also established a process by which to move from personal to shared experiences” (Cahill, 2007a, p. 303).

I took a similar approach in attempt to harness the full potential and benefits of this technique. During our gatherings, time was set aside for youth to discuss the journaling in addition to working on the group project.

Mental mapping was chosen because it allows us to capture socio-spatial relationships, experiences, and emotions of everyday spatial experiences. The maps may portray multi-faceted meanings and interpretations of space and place that are difficult to get at otherwise (e.g. through language). This participatory tool is flexible in that it allows the mapmakers’ perception of scale, distance, landscapes, and features to surface (as opposed to the blank map they are asked to draw on during the questionnaire and interview). Gould and White (1974) are credited with the early development of this tool in their book *Mental Maps*, which has since then been updated and re-published in 1986, 1993, 2004, and 2012. Over time, this technique has been used in various ways by

behavioral, humanistic, and cultural geographers. Given the disadvantages of mental mapping – for instance, the transformation of a three-dimensional world into two dimensions, and the limitations in people’s drawing and memory ability – they are best used with other, complementary methods (Soini, 2001). In this study, map descriptions and journal entries will help contextualize the mental maps drawn by the youth.

An example of the use of mental mapping is a study on young people, job search, and labor markets conducted in Belfast (Green et al, 2005). As part of in-depth focus group discussions, youth were asked to draw free-hand maps of Belfast and show where they live, which roads and bus routes they use, well-known landmarks, and areas they perceive as safe or unsafe. Results showed that “young people have a highly localised outlook. Factors of limited mobility, lack of confidence and religion intertwine in complex ways to limit perceived opportunities. It is concluded that geography does play a role in shaping access to employment and training opportunities” (p.301).

Though the maps and journals can be rich in data, the process of analyzing and synthesizing this kind of data is challenging (Amsden and VanWynsberghe, 2005). The ‘lack of a boilerplate’ in qualitative analysis, particularly in ‘non-traditional’ forms of data, raises challenges as well as opportunities (Pratt, 2009). On one hand, the lack of rigid formulas provides the flexibility for analyses that are best suited to the employed methods and data. On the other hand, it means there is no guidebook to follow that will ensure a ‘successful’ and widely accepted standardized analysis. In this case, the journal entries were typed up, coded, and analyzed using content-analysis and grounded theory. I developed coding guidelines and facilitated a coding session where each individual identified open, axial and selective codes (guided by Strauss and Corbin’s grounded

theory; see Appendix) in their own work. Time was set aside during one of the PAR meetings for each participant to code their own work, adding an additional layer of analysis, participation, and co-learning. The process of involving youth in coding was inspired by Cahill (2007a) who had youth researcher read each other's journals and look for themes. Prior to reviewing the participants' analysis of their own work, I coded their work and, subsequently, the two analyses were combined and compared.

Although the use of mental mapping is becoming more widespread as a way to obtain cartographic representations of people's relationship with places, especially among behavioral geographers, little has been written about how to analyze the maps. Soini (2001) provides some insight and suggests concentrating on the elements out of which people organize geographic spaces or focusing on people's spatial preferences. In the case of the former, paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks (the 'building blocks' of all maps) can be identified. This approach is derived from work by Kevin Lynch. In *The Image of the City*, Lynch (1960) lays the groundwork for urban design and planning by breaking down five elements of the city: 'paths' along with movement flows (roads, transit lines, canals, e.g.); 'edges' which distinguish one form of urban form from the next; 'districts,' medium-to-large sections of the city; 'nodes,' strategic points or main junctions; and 'landmarks,' reference points that include buildings, stores, or a physical feature such as a mountain. For the latter approach, emphasis is placed on the significance and meaning of place as drawn on the map. The map may highlight certain social relations or hierarchies, for instance. I combined the two because the first approach may help answer research question a) What socio-spatial practices do Hispanic youth use to access and navigate the labor market? by identifying distances traveled and resources

accessed. The second approach, on the other hand, gets more at the research question b) What are the outcomes and implications of these potentially divergent pathways?, because it can help visualize spatial inclusion/exclusion and how certain places or areas may be avoided. Both help us understand the symbolic form of landscapes and perceived distance in the eyes of Hispanic immigrant youth, whereas the map they are asked to annotate in the questionnaire focuses more on physical form and distance. They complement one another and both are important in understanding people's spatial mobility. Thus, herein lies also an opportunity to compare the maps to see if stark differences emerge. I acknowledge there is 'fuzziness' in analyzing mental maps and individual spatial preferences (Thill & Sui, 1993). However, using complementary techniques and engaging in triangulation can make up for individual tool shortcomings.

### 3.5.5 Field Notes and Observations

I used field notes and participant observations to add information to the interviews and the PAR project and to reflect on the research process. Field notes were recorded and categorized according to the following topics:

- a - Being out in the community, recruiting and talking to people about the project;
- b - Questionnaire and interview observations;
- c - Notes on the process of setting up the PAR project;
- d - Notes on executing the PAR project;
- e - Other relevant ideas, thoughts, and observations.

These categories were chosen because they reflect the different aspects and steps of this study.

Observational methods are commonly applied to examine the everyday lives of people and understand human activity. This fieldwork methodology provides direct insight into behaviors and may provide a deeper insight into people's experiences (Cotton et al., 2010). The goal is to use multiple senses (seeing, feeling, hearing) to look beyond the surface of what is happening and "see with clarity" (Anderson, 2005). The degree in which the researcher is involved with the group may vary. Challenges of observation that may reduce its validity include: a) the researcher only pays attention to aspects that fit into their perspective; b) an 'outsider' translating behaviors and interactions (verbal and non-verbal) into their version of written communication; c) a lengthy delay between fieldwork and writing (Jackson, 1983). That said, these can be reduced through critical reflexivity and combining observational modes with other qualitative or quantitative methods. Reflexivity is self-critical introspection and self-conscious scrutiny of the self as researcher (Bauder and Sharpe, 2000).

I recognize that a completely objective eye is not feasible and my own positionality and experiences will influence the ways in which I process and analyze information. "With critical reflection, however, observation can be transformed into a self-conscious, effective, and ethically sound practice" (Anderson, 2005, p. 241). I therefore used critical reflexivity as well as triangulation with other methodologies to enhance the rigor, reliability, and ethics of my observations. I made an effort to keep an open mind and use the publications I have read on this topic as a baseline rather than assuming the participants will behave and respond exactly like in other studies. Highlighting the overlap and contradictions between my findings and previous work helps move our understanding of this topic forward.

My observations and ongoing analyses were woven into the final narrative, in order to portray “fully the participants of the study without compromising anonymity” (Ponterotto, 2006, p. 546). This merging of “participants’ lived experiences with the researcher’s interpretations of these experiences” creates “thick meaning for the reader as well as for the participants and the researcher” (idem, p. 547).

### 3.6 Recruitment, Locations, and Costs

All PAR meetings and most interviews<sup>19</sup> were held at the Latin American Coalition (LAC), a community partner for this study. The LAC is Charlotte’s Hispanic immigrants’ rights and service organization. The organization “promotes full and equal participation of all people in the civic, economic and cultural life of North Carolina through education, celebration and advocacy” (<http://www.latinamericancoalition.org>). My involvements with the LAC through research partnerships and volunteering have allowed me to establish a good relationship with the organization, providing access to this space. The LAC is located on the Eastside of Charlotte, in an area with a high concentration of immigrants and Latinos, and is considered a trusted space by the Hispanic population in Charlotte and therefore provides a safe environment for the participants and myself. We met in the youth advocacy room, an ideal space for our project.

To clarify the partnership for this study, we decided on a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), outlining the roles and responsibilities of both parties. With a MoU in place, partners are less likely to run into confusion or misunderstandings down

---

<sup>19</sup> If the participant was unable to access the LAC, an alternate location was decided on that was convenient for the participant, safe for both parties, and with enough privacy to maintain confidentiality.

the road. After meeting to discuss the options, the form was drafted by me, reviewed and edited by the LAC youth development coordinators, and signed by all parties. In return for providing space for interviews and PAR meetings, I offered to assist with LAC youth workshops and share my study findings.

Recruitment started at the Latin American Coalition and from there I networked out to advertise the study and recruit participants. I also used flyers around town, word-of-mouth, and a local Hispanic newspaper to get the word out. Potential participants called me or I received their contact information from someone who referred them. Several participants and school staff who I spoke with referred other participants. My experience working with the Hispanic community in Charlotte helped gain access to a typically hard-to-reach population. Trust is very important in the Hispanic immigrant community in Charlotte and particularly those who are undocumented are often fearful of ‘outsiders.’ On several occasions, I spoke with parents over the phone or made house visits to explain the study to parents of participants. I believe this was very important in gaining trust. Fortunately, I speak Spanish, so I was able to translate the research materials and communicate with participants’ parents.

I was fortunate to have generous funding from the National Science Foundation (NSF)’s Geography and Spatial Sciences Program Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Award (GSS-DDRI) and the Society of Women Geographers’ (SWG) Evelyn L. Pruitt National Fellowship for Dissertation Research to execute my study as designed and compensate participants. For the interview and questionnaire, each participant received a \$25 gift card. For completing the PAR project, each person received a \$100 gift card. Other expenditures included: video and audio recording



devices used in data collection; mailing participants consent form copies, preliminary results and PAR invitations; hiring a Hispanic undergraduate research assistant (for Fall 2014); attending several conferences to present results; office supplies, T-shirts, and journals for the PAR project; printing research and PAR forms; leadership development courses for participants; tokens of appreciations for guest speakers and participants. Specific funds were set aside for the PAR project. During the second PAR meeting, time was set aside to plan the budget together with participants. An additional grant from the UNC Charlotte Chancellor's Diversity Fund allowed me to hire another Hispanic undergraduate research assistant (for Spring 2015) and provide refreshments at PAR meetings. In addition, we received a sponsorship from a local business leader for the website for one year, and a local restaurant donated food for our youth professional development seminar. Local newspaper and radio featured us for free.

To my knowledge, no prior research has been conducted on Hispanic immigrant youth accessing the urban labor market, using these mixed-methods, conceptual frameworks, and theoretical approaches. The comparison between authorized and unauthorized youth will allow me to tease apart some of the intersections documentation status has with other variables, such as class, gender, ethnicity, and educational attainment. Looking at the spatial in addition to the social aspects of labor market access adds another layer to my study that sets it apart from existing work. Moreover, new immigrant gateways are highly understudied; most research on (undocumented) migrants still focuses predominantly on well-established gateway cities. As demonstrated in the following chapters, some of my findings are in line with what other researchers have found, whereas other results contradict or provide new insights on existing theories, models, and epistemologies.

## CHAPTER 4: THE SOCIAL CONTEXT AND INFLUENCES OF YOUTH LABOR MARKET EXPERIENCES

Using descriptive and contextual data drawn largely from the US Census Bureau (PUMS) and Charlotte Quality of Life study, this chapter begins by introduces the bigger picture of Hispanic youth in Charlotte-Mecklenburg and the Charlotte-Gastonia-Rock Hill metropolitan area, This contextualizes the smaller scale study sample and the more qualitative findings gleaned from participants themselves through the use of questionnaires, interviews, mental mapping and journaling. The chapter provides a broad social, spatial, and economic berth in which to interpret the results subsequently presented in the dissertation as a whole and offers an opportunity to explore how the quantitative and qualitative inform each other, overlap and/or contradict. The chapter ends with an explanation of how various societal factors, such as policies and discrimination influence Hispanic immigrant youth work experiences.

As a research study, one of the goals of this project is to ensure rigor and repeatability of analysis as well as explanation of that analysis so that it clearly connects data to conclusion in a way that readers understand. Following Crowley, et al. (2006, p. 857) , the goal is to “write a compelling and focused account that 1) honors the worldview of informants, 2) provides sufficient evidence for claims, 3) significantly contributes to extant theory.” This involves demonstrating a “clear chain of evidence” demonstrating how the researcher (and co-researchers) developed interpretations and

theory from the data. I do this, in part, by providing illustrative examples and supportive quotes throughout this and the results and discussion chapters to follow.

#### 4.1 Labor Market Characteristics of Hispanic Youth: A Metropolitan Sample

Table 2: Results for Charlotte-Gastonia-Rock Hill metropolitan area (2011 ACS 5-year, 2011 ACS 3-year and 2012 ACS 3-year data combined)

	Hispanic youth 16-21yrs, all	Hispanic youth 16-21yrs, foreign-born (FB)	Hispanic youth 16-21yrs, US-born
<b>Sample size (N)</b>	31,240	15,685	15,555
<b>Mean age</b>	18.54 years (SD: 1.77)	18.99 years (SD: 1.67)	18.09 years (SD: 1.75)
<b>Sex</b>	55.1% male, 44.9% female	65.1% male, 34.9% female	45.0% male, 55.0% female
<b>Mean household income</b>	\$49,311 (SD: \$43,067)*	\$48,409 (SD: \$35,138)**	\$51,826 (SD: \$50,880)***
<b>Mean personal income earned</b>	\$5,719 (SD: \$8,109)*	\$8,148 (SD: \$9,666)**	\$3,435 (SD: \$5,815)***
<b>Mean family income</b>	\$39,424 (SD: \$43,693)*	\$31,916 (SD: \$32,931)**	\$48,321 (SD: \$52,083)
<b>Mean poverty status</b>	160 (SD: 127)	145 (SD: 105)	177 (SD: 145)
<b>Birthplace (general), &gt;1%</b>	US-born: 9.2% California, 11.5% NC, 9.9% New York, 3.2% New Jersey, 3.1% Puerto Rico, 2.8% Florida, 1.9% Texas, 1.3% Georgia FB: 33.2% Mexico, 11.7% Central America, 4.0% South America	66.1% Mexico, 23.4% Central America, 8.0% South America, 1.5% West Indies	23.1% NC, 9.9% NY, 18.5% CA, 6.2% Puerto Rico, 5.7% FL, 3.9% TX, 2.7% GA, 2.0% Maine, 1.9% SC, 1.5% PA, 1.4% Illinois
<b>Birthplace (detailed), &gt;1%</b>	FB: 6.3% El Salvador, 4.0% Honduras, 1.7% Colombia, 1.0% Guatemala, 0.9% Ecuador, 0.5% Costa Rica, 0.5% Chile, 0.3% Venezuela, 0.3% Peru	66.1% Mexico, 12.5% El Salvador, 7.9% Honduras, 3.4% Colombia, 1.9% Guatemala, 1.8% Ecuador, 1.3% Dominican Republic, 1.1% Chile	See above.
<b>Citizenship status</b>	49.8% US-born, 47.6% not a citizen, 1.9% naturalized citizens, 0.7% born abroad to American parents	94.9% not a citizen, 3.7% naturalized citizen, 1.4% born abroad of US parents	100% citizens
<b>School attendance</b>	56.6% in school, 43.4% not in school	33.5% in school, 66.5% not in school	79.8% in school, 20.2% not in school
<b>Employment status</b>	43.8% are not in the labor force (36.2% is), 45.8% employed, 10.3% unemployed	37.9% not in labor force (62.1% is), 52.8% employed, 9.3% unemployed	49.8% not in labor force (50.2% is), 38.8% employed, 11.4% unemployed
<b>Most common occupations</b>	39.8% have never worked. 7.5% work as cashiers, 3.9% work as retail salespersons, 3.1% as waiters and waitresses, 2.9% work as carpenters, 2.7% as construction laborers, 1.9% work as cooks, 1.7% as maids and housekeeper cleaners	34.6% have never worked. 5.8% carpenters, 4.6% construction laborers, 3.5% cashiers, 3.1% maids and housekeeper cleaners, 2.9% roofers, 2.5% Pipelayers, Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters, 2.3% Brickmasons, Blockmasons, and Stonemasons, 2.2% cooks, 2.0% Waiters and Waitresses, 1.9% Retail Salespersons	45.1% have never worked, 11.4% cashiers, 5.9% Retail Salespersons, 4.3% Waiters and Waitresses, 2.5% Customer Service Representatives, 2.2% Stock Clerks and Order Fillers, 1.7% Athletes, Coaches, Umpires, and Related Workers
<b>Usual hours worked per week</b>	43.5% 0 hrs, 19.8% 40 hrs, 7.4% 20 hrs, 3.9% 30 hrs, 2.9% 15 hrs, 6.3% > 40 hrs, 10.0% <20hrs	39.4% 0 hrs, 30.0% 40 hrs, 7.2% 20hrs, 4.8% 30 hrs, 9.1% >40hrs, 1.7% <20 hrs	47.8% 0 hrs, 9.6% 40hrs, 7.6% 20 hrs, 3.0% 30hrs, 3.7% >40hrs, 18.4% <20hrs
<b>Looking for work?</b>	44.2% No, 10.3% Yes (45.5% not reported)	38.2% No, 7.8% Yes (54.1% not reported)	50.3% Yes, 13.0% No (36.8% not reported)

Table 2: (continued)

	Hispanic youth 16-21yrs, all	Hispanic youth 16-21yrs, foreign-born (FB)	Hispanic youth 16-21yrs, US-born
<b>Poverty status</b>	37.2% live in families below the poverty threshold. 26.0% are individuals whose family income is more than twice the appropriate poverty threshold; 12.6% have a family income greater than 3 times the poverty threshold; 7.5% greater than 4 times the poverty threshold.	35.6% live in families below the poverty threshold. 33.0% are individuals whose family income is more than twice the poverty threshold; 5.6% have a family income greater than 3 times the poverty threshold; 3.0% greater than 4 times the poverty threshold.	38.9% live in families below the poverty threshold. 31.3% are individuals whose family income is more than twice the appropriate poverty threshold; 18.9% have a family income greater than 3 times poverty threshold; 12.0% greater than 4 times the poverty threshold.
<b>Means of transportation to work (&gt;1% )</b>	54.7% N/A, 40.4% auto/truck/van, 1.0% bus, 1.5% walked	47.3% N/A, 47.7% auto/truck/van, 2.0% bus, 0.2% walked	62.6% N/A, 33.1% auto/truck/van, 2.8% walked
<b>Vehicle occupancy</b>	59.6% N/A, 23.2% drives alone, 9.9% 2 people, 4.2% 3 people, 1.3% 4 people, 1.5% 5 people	52.3% N/A, 22.1% drives alone, 11.2% 2 people, 8.0% 3 people, 2.5% 4 people, 2.9% 5 people	66.9% N/A, 24.2% drives alone, 8.6% 2 people, 0.3% 3 people, 0% 4 or more people
<b>Travel time to work</b>	55.3% N/A, 22.0% 15min or less, 18% 20-30 min, 4.9% > 30min	47.5% N/A, 14.8% 15min or less, 25.7% 20-30min, 6.9% >30min.	63.0% N/A, 23.7% 15min or less, 10.1% 20-30min, 3.0% >30min.
<b>Metropolitan area status</b>	44.3% in central city, 26.1% outside central city (29.7% unknown)	42.2% in central city, 27.8% outside central city (30.0% unknown)	46.3% in central city, 24.4% outside central city (29.3% unknown)
<b>Parents' citizenship status</b>	Mother: 27.8% not a citizen, 9.0% naturalized citizen, 17.3% N/A, 45.8% missing value Father: 26.7% not a citizen, 7.0% naturalized citizen, 7.7% N/A, 58.2% missing value	Mother: 29.4% not a citizen, 1.8% naturalized citizen, 2.3% N/A, 66.5% missing value Father: 27.3% not a citizen, 4.2% naturalized citizen, .6% N/A, 67.5% missing value	Mother: 26.2% not a citizen, 16.3% naturalized citizen, 32.3% N/A, 25.0% missing value Father: 26.1% not a citizen, 9.3% naturalized citizen, 14.8% N/A, 48.9% missing value
<b>Parents' employment</b>	Mother: 36.9% employed, 4.7% unemployed, 12.6% not in labor force, 45.8% missing value Father: 33.5% employed, 2.9% unemployed, 5.4% not in labor force, 58.2% missing value	Mother: 23.0% employed, 1.4% unemployed, 9.1% not in labor force, 66.5% missing value Father: 28.7% employed, 3.8% unemployed, .1% not in labor force, 67.5% missing value	Mother: 50.9% employed, 10.8% unemployed, 21.3% not in labor force, 25.0% missing value Father: 75.0% employed, 3.9% unemployed, 21.1% not in labor force, 48.9% missing value

\*N= 30,261; removed income of 9999999

\*\*N= 15,541; removed income of 9999999

\*\*\*N = 14,720; removed income of 9999999

Note: highlighted sections point our notable results

### US Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Micro

Sample (PUMS) data offers untabulated records of individual persons and households.

Data sets can be created by identifying the demographics of the sample you are looking

for. In this case, I selected all Latino/a youth aged 16-21 in the Charlotte-Gastonia-Rock

Hill metropolitan area (the smallest geographic unit) and broke down the sample into a

foreign-born and a US-born group (Table 2). There are several distinct differences between these sub-sections. About half of this group is US-born, thereby automatically receiving US citizenship. For the 15,555 foreign-born youth in the sample, however, 94.9% are not citizens. For this group, the process of obtaining citizenship will vary depending on their current status, among other eligibility factors<sup>20</sup> and, if eligible, can take months to years to complete.

Compared to the US-born group, the foreign-born Hispanic youth were slightly older (about 1 year on average) and more likely to be male (65.1% vs. 45.0%)<sup>21</sup>. Their age distributions were also different, with foreign-born youth more likely to be older; 47.5% are 20 or 21, while US-born Hispanic youth were over twice as likely to be 16 and only 27.5% are 20 or 21 (Figures 14 and 15). These age and gender representations are parallel to nation-level age and gender distributions for Hispanics in the US; foreign-born Hispanics are more likely to be male than female, and they are older than US-born Hispanics (Pew Research Center, 2010). The parental variables have many missing variables, making it difficult to draw any conclusions from this data.

---

<sup>20</sup> Naturalization eligibility requirements include: a) You are at least 18 years old; b) You are a Permanent Resident for the past 5 years and, during those years, you have not been out of the US for 30 months or more, and not taken a trip out of the US that lasted over 12 months OR if you are at least 18 years old and are currently married to and living with a U.S. citizen; and have been married to and living with that same U.S. citizen for the past 3 years without leaving the United States for trips of 6 months or longer, and your spouse has been a U.S. citizen for the past 3 years; c) Read, write and speak basic English; d) You are of good moral character; e) You pass the citizenship test covering fundamentals of US history and the form and principles of US government (USCIS).

Note: for most undocumented immigrants, there is no path to becoming legalized, let alone citizens.

<sup>21</sup> The higher representations of males in the foreign-born group reflects that the pioneering argument still has some (albeit declining) relevance. This is an older group that have limited English ability and come to the US predominantly to work. This PUMS sample incorporates this group, as well as the 1.5-generation, who have different characteristics and experiences.

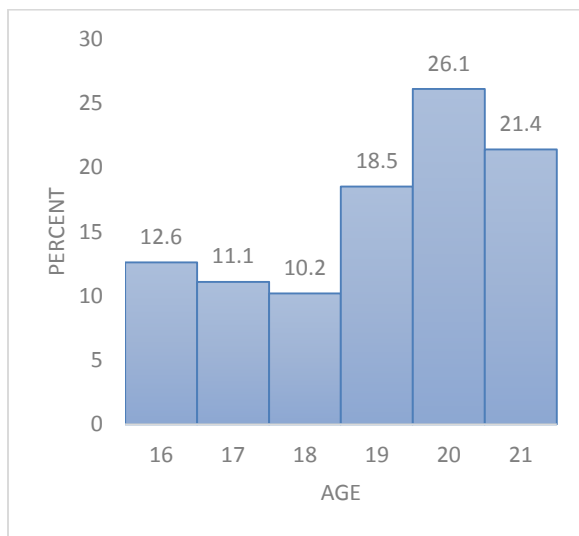


Figure 14: Age distribution Hispanic foreign-born youth

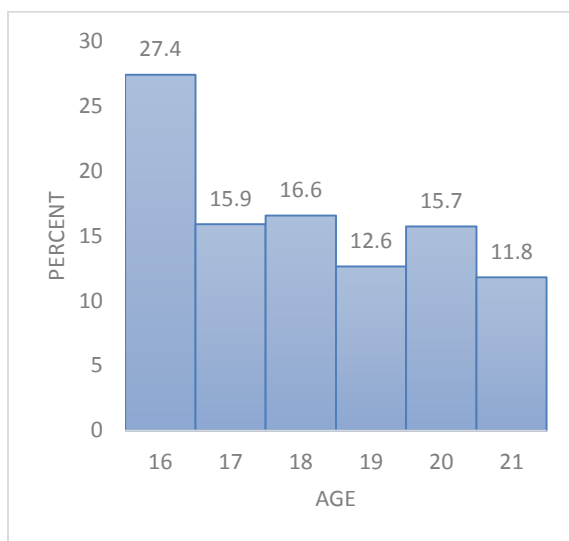


Figure 15: Age distribution Hispanic US-born youth

Among foreign-born Hispanic youth in the Charlotte-Gastonia-Rock Hill metropolitan area, almost half (48.8%) had only been in the US for six years or less (Figure 16). This means a significant number are not part of the 1.5-generation I am studying and, accordingly, their demographics and characteristics are more similar to those of first-generation immigrants.

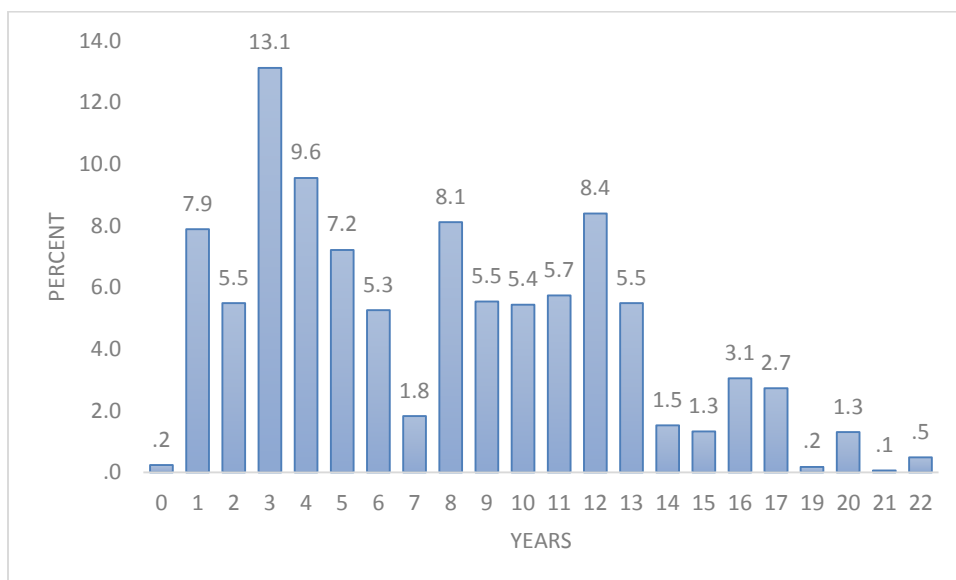


Figure 16: Years in the US, foreign-born Hispanic youth

While the US-born and foreign-born Hispanic groups have similar household incomes, there is less variation in household income for the foreign-born group (Table 2). US-born youth have lower personal income (because they work fewer hours) but higher family incomes (\$48,321 vs. \$31,916). The latter confirms the traditional immigrant story that incomes will rise as immigrants become more established in the US. However, US-born youth live in households with a higher poverty status than their foreign-born peers (38.9% vs. 35.6%), and poverty is more extreme among this group, with fewer families making over 200%, 300%, 400%, and 500% of the poverty threshold). Figure 17 visualizes the poverty status of the US-born vs. the foreign-born group. The reason for this might be that US-born youth households are only made up by their direct family members, whereas foreign-born youth households include other income-earning persons.

In other words, their household is made up by more than their family members, increasing their average household income.

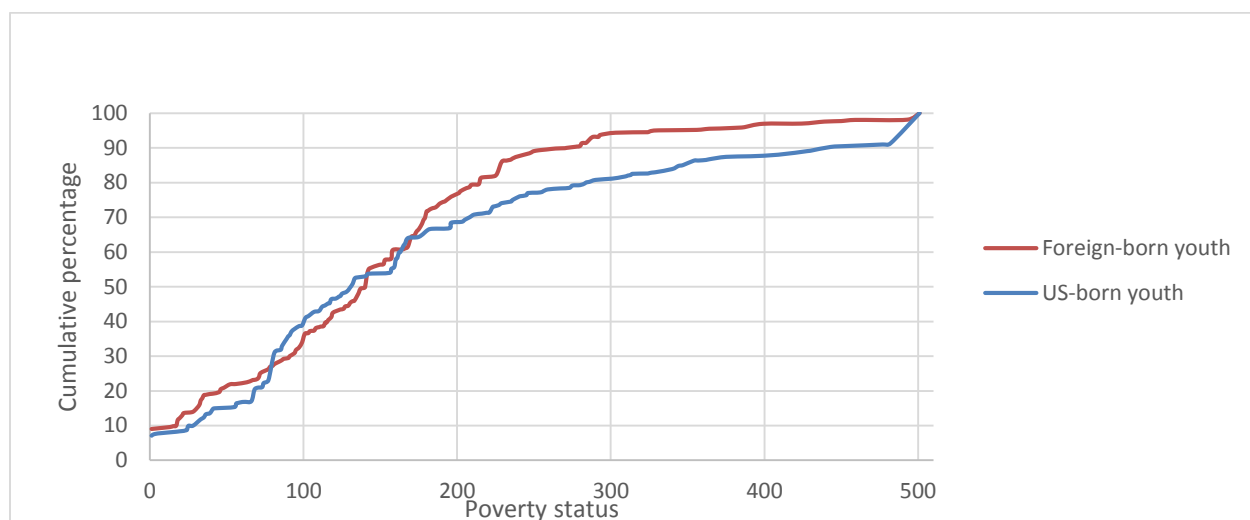


Figure 17: Poverty status for US-born vs. foreign-born Hispanic youth

Despite similarity in age, school attendance is much higher for US-born youth: 79.8% are in school vs. only 33.5% of the foreign-born youth. This is partially because the foreign-born group tends to be older. Furthermore, nationwide, foreign-born Hispanic youth are less likely to be enrolled in school (and in college) than their US-born counterparts and more likely to drop out of high school (Pew Research Center, 2013). Qualitative data presented later in this study corroborate national trends and PUMS data. Divergent school attendance rates translate into variations in labor market participation rates; foreign-born youth are more likely to be in the labor force (62.1% vs. 50.2% of US-born youth) and they work more hours. For instance, 30.0% work 40 hours/week, 9.1% work over 40 hours/week, and only 1.7% work fewer than 20 hours/week. For US-born youth, on the other hand, only 9.6% work 40 hours/week, 3.7% work over 40 hours/week, and 18.4% work fewer than 20 hours/week (reflecting the fact that they are



often in school). When working, US-born and foreign-born youth also tend to be employed in different sectors. Again, this ties back to the group composition of the foreign-born youth and some being considered first-generation immigrants (this is the older cohort within the sample and they have been here for a shorter amount of time), whereas others are – like my target population – part of the 1.5-generation (the cohort that tends to be younger and has been in the US for longer).

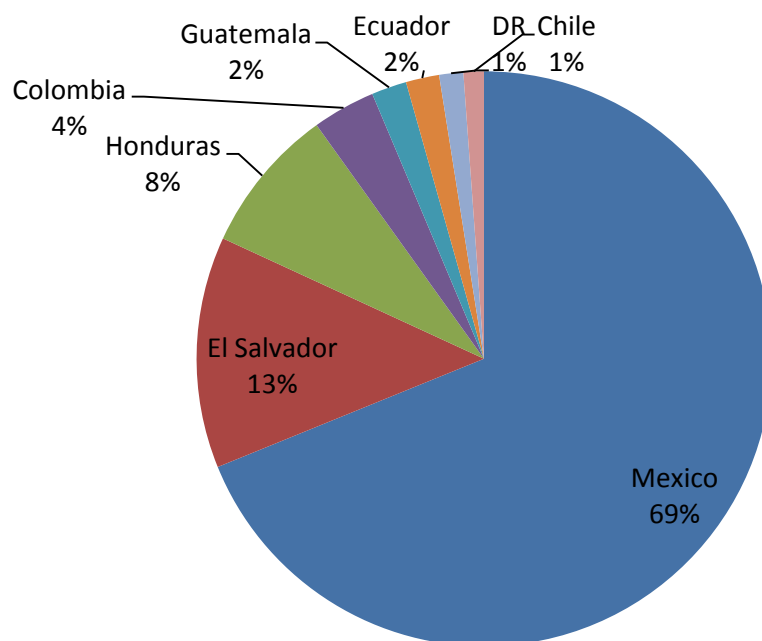


Figure 18: Countries of origin for foreign-born youth 16-21 in Charlotte-Gastonia-Rock Hill metro area

Note: DR = Dominican Republic

#### 4.2 Labor Market Characteristics of Hispanic Youth: The Study Sample

The methods chapter provided an overview of the main demographic characteristics of the study participants. In terms of work experiences, the 36 participants collectively had 85 jobs. I categorized the jobs similarly to the Census data to allow for

comparisons. There are significant variations in work experiences among the youth; 9 (25%) had never worked, while others had had up to 8 different jobs already. Compared to other Hispanic foreign-born youth in the Charlotte metropolitan area, participants are more likely to have work experience. Of those 85 jobs that participants current hold or held in the past, 24.4% (19) were as waiters and waitresses (mostly waitresses) at immigrant-owned restaurants (Latin American and Asian), chain restaurants, and catering companies (Table 3). The second most common occupation was cashier, with 12.9% (11) of the jobs, mostly at fast-food restaurants such as McDonalds and Domino's pizza. There are 9 examples of youth working at their university or community college, for instance as assistants and student coordinators and 8 of youth working as retail salespersons (e.g. at Home Depot, Target, and shops at the mall). Youth have also had internships at hospitals, banks and a management firm, and work as secretaries or office assistants for local contracting companies. The remaining, non-categorized jobs include helping at a food pantry, picking up trash, and working as a Certified Nurse Aid (CNA) in home care.

Compared to jobs held by other Hispanic youth in the Charlotte metropolitan area (Table 3, adapting PUMS data from Table 2), study participants had jobs similar to the jobs held by their US-born peers. In addition, they held jobs more typical of foreign-born Latinos (youth and their parents) in construction, cleaning, and landscaping. My sample varies from the PUMS data drawn from all 31,240 youth in this metropolitan area in that study participants are also gaining work experience in their fields of interest, such as IT offices and student services on college campuses and internships at professional firms (the PUMS data in the adjacent column would suggest otherwise, Table 3). Youth secure their first, part-time jobs often through family and therefore mirror the jobs and industries

in which many of their parents and other first-generation Hispanic immigrants work.

However, they also obtain jobs through friends (who may be US-born or foreign-born)

and connections at their schools.

Table 3: Youth occupations

<b>Study participants (85 current and past jobs)</b>	<b>Hispanic youth 16-21yrs, foreign-born (FB)</b>	<b>Hispanic youth 16-21yrs, US-born</b>
25.0% had never worked 24.4% (19 jobs) as waiters and waitresses 12.9% (11 jobs) as cashiers, e.g. at (fast food) restaurants, grocery stores 10.6% (9 jobs) as student assistants 9.4% (8 jobs) as retail salespersons 8.2% (7 jobs) as construction laborers, painters 7.1% (6 jobs) as interns, e.g. at a hospital, bank, management firm 7.1% (6 jobs) as cleaners, staff in (dry-) cleaning, laundry mat 3.5% (3 jobs) as secretaries 4.7% (4 jobs) as tutors 3.5% (3 jobs) as baby sitters/child care 3.5% (3 jobs) as landscapers (family business) 1.2% (1 job) as a cook 5 jobs: 'Other'	34.6% have never worked Most common jobs, in order: - Carpenters - Construction laborers - Cashiers - Maids and housekeeper cleaners - Roofers - Pipe layers, Plumbers, Pipefitters, and Steamfitters - Brick masons, Block masons, and Stonemasons - Cooks - Waiters and Waitresses - Retail Salespersons	45.1% have never worked Most common jobs, in order: - Cashiers - Retail Salespersons - Waiters and Waitresses - Customer Service Representatives - Stock Clerks and Order Fillers - Athletes, Coaches, Umpires, and Related Workers

In the Charlotte metropolitan area, US-born Hispanic youth have higher rates of never having worked than their foreign-born peers (45.1% vs. 34.6%). Given what we know about these cohorts, this is likely because the US-born cohort is younger and more likely to still be in school full-time. For my sample, 3 in 4 had some form of work experience (often part-time or summer jobs), even though 94.4% were still enrolled in school. Reasons for seeking employment varied between wishing to contribute to the household or family business, to having their own spending money, to gaining experience for a future career.

Nationwide, the labor force participation rate for all youth aged 16-24 years old was 60.0% in July, 2015 (up by 12.5% from the non-summer months, due to the large numbers of youth seeking summer employment). Twenty-seven percent of employed youth worked in the leisure and hospitality industry (including food services), 20% worked in retail, and 11% worked in education and health services. Employment rates varied little by gender, but they did by race/ethnicity, with 62.3% of White youth employed, 56.4% of Black youth, 56.2% of Hispanic youth, and 44.6% of Asian youth (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). Proportionately to their total employment numbers, Hispanic youth were overrepresented in construction, transportation and utilities, financial activities, and self-employment or unpaid family workers. Hispanic youth were underrepresented in agriculture and related industries, and education and health services (there were no significant differences for manufacturing, retail, information, professional and business services, and leisure and hospitality) (Figure 19).

[Numbers in thousands. Data are not seasonally adjusted.]

Industry and class of worker	Total		White		Black or African American		Asian		Hispanic or Latino ethnicity	
	July 2014	July 2015	July 2014	July 2015	July 2014	July 2015	July 2014	July 2015	July 2014	July 2015
Total employed.....	20,085	20,333	15,917	15,903	2,376	2,645	834	855	3,903	4,127
Agriculture and related industries.....	353	309	340	294	7	7	0	1	86	47
Nonagricultural industries.....	19,732	20,024	15,577	15,609	2,369	2,638	834	853	3,817	4,079
Private wage and salary workers <sup>1</sup> .....	18,052	18,223	14,207	14,169	2,175	2,418	774	791	3,551	3,790
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction.....	126	75	118	68	4	0	4	3	28	9
Construction.....	879	883	768	799	39	36	19	1	269	267
Manufacturing.....	1,328	1,385	1,094	1,133	120	162	69	46	277	322
Durable goods.....	813	882	692	726	51	104	42	33	140	173
Nondurable goods.....	516	504	402	406	69	58	27	14	137	149
Wholesale trade.....	338	277	287	228	22	24	20	12	82	94
Retail trade.....	3,843	4,005	2,872	2,902	577	680	175	206	763	785
Transportation and utilities.....	516	447	376	337	100	73	11	13	120	133
Information.....	341	288	278	221	25	30	16	30	74	52
Financial activities.....	760	725	617	571	73	93	35	39	134	180
Professional and business services.....	1,632	1,547	1,329	1,228	151	158	97	75	347	332
Education and health services.....	2,142	2,236	1,611	1,664	312	331	142	137	383	368
Leisure and hospitality.....	5,078	5,437	3,976	4,234	635	762	161	196	902	1,098
Other services.....	1,068	918	883	784	116	68	26	33	174	150
Government wage and salary workers.....	1,310	1,403	1,056	1,091	165	195	42	47	185	189
Federal.....	131	114	78	82	43	14	6	9	21	3
State.....	535	541	447	414	42	77	23	19	76	80
Local.....	644	748	532	595	80	103	13	18	88	106
Self-employed, unincorporated, and unpaid family workers.....	369	398	314	349	30	26	18	16	81	100

<sup>1</sup> Includes self-employed workers whose businesses are incorporated.

NOTE: Estimates for the above race groups (white, black or African American, and Asian) do not sum to totals because data are not presented for all races. Persons whose ethnicity is identified as Hispanic or Latino may be of any race. Updated population controls are introduced annually with the release of January data.

Figure 19: Employed persons 16-24 years of age, July 2014-2015. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015, p.8

The types of jobs youth are holding (in my sample and in the metropolitan area; Table 3) are typical of their age and do not necessarily point to stunted upward mobility. Their salaries are reflective of this. At the time of the questionnaire, working youth received an average pay of about \$9 an hour, ranging from \$7.50 to \$13.50 (minimum wage is \$7.25 in North Carolina). Lower-end jobs are often considered “bad jobs” due to their low wages, few/no benefits, and limited paths for advancement (Kalleberg, 2011) and the assumption that the workers are poor (Besen-Cassino, 2014, p.2). However, our current economy has greater variety among part-time jobs and “[a]ccording to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Report on the Youth Labor Force (Herman 2000), the labor-force participation rate of youth is the highest (71.6 percent) in the highest socioeconomic

group and is lowest in the lowest socioeconomic group (40.6 percent)” (Besen-Cassino, 2014, p.2). Retail and service jobs are no longer as easy for youth to obtain because adult workers are also competing for these jobs. Employer preferences may influence higher employment rates for White youth and more affluent youth. Along those lines, “Just like products, the jobs themselves are *branded*” (Besen-Cassino, 2014, p.25), and the more affluent youth get the higher-end brand jobs at the mall, whereas the less affluent youth (who are disproportionately minority and immigrant) get the same low-end jobs but at less desirable places. Thus, class stratification in the work force starts here.

This means we should pay attention to the types of jobs youth are holding, as well as the industries and sectors in which they are working, and the working conditions and connections they gain in those environments. It also tells us that, when studying youth labor markets, we need to look beyond “the context and conditions of work” as well as “the effects of race, gender, and socioeconomic status in determining access and working conditions” as well as prospects of economic mobility (Besen-Cassino, 2014, p.7).

Further chapters explore these factors.

As demonstrated in Table 3, study participants collectively held 85 current and past jobs, including industries where Hispanics are generally concentrated (e.g. construction, cleaning, landscaping), but also in higher education, Information Technology (IT), health care, and banking, where Hispanics are often underrepresented. As mentioned in the literature review, Kasinitz, et al. (2004) found that second generation immigrants have different labor market profiles compared to their parents and they are largely assimilated into the mainstream labor market. Based on my data, however, this does not seem to be fully the case for the 1.5-generation. While some youth are holding

jobs and working in industries akin to their non-immigrant peers, the ethnic economy still plays a significant role for 1.5-generation Hispanic young adults. Participants in college are gaining a foothold as assistants and interns in professional sectors, which seems promising, but there is no guarantee they will secure full-time employment and ‘move up’ in these companies (also, only a select group makes it to and through a four-year college). In that sense, the 1.5-generation truly are the ‘in between’ group, with – on one hand – very ‘Americanized’ lives, but often being reminded of their immigrant background and status.

It appears the 1.5 generation can leverage ethnic network advantages ('ethnic premiums') and disadvantages ('ethnic penalties') in the same way first generation immigrants do, though – as previous studies have suggested – they prefer to steer away from ethnic entrepreneurship and ethnic niches in the labor market. As mentioned in the literature review, there is currently no empirical evidence suggesting that children of immigrants are concentrated in certain industries or segregated from the mainstream labor market. I found that many are concentrated in the industries in which their parents work and thereby segregated from the mainstream labor market, but when 1.5-generation youth work in “ethnic niches,” they take on new roles based on their American background, such as interpreting. Thus, in some cases, their social capital, US education and English language ability allows them to assimilate into the mainstream labor force, but in other cases youth apply these assets within ethnic economies.

My data suggest labor market segmentation is occurring by immigration status and as a consequence of networks. However, youth reject jobs their parents’ jobs as a long-term option, because they see the downsides of working low-wage jobs as an adult

and have career expectations similar to their US-born American peers. Labor market segmentation among 1.5-generation immigrant youth can use further investigation to avoid speculation or confirming stereotypes.

The data presented in this chapter so far offer a context in which to view the results in this dissertation. We now delve deeper into the labor market experiences of Hispanic immigrant youth, drawing upon data collected from qualitative and participatory methods.

#### 4.3 Millennials Coming of Age

In some ways, study participants' experiences are reflective of their generation. The Millennial generation (born 1980-2000) is the biggest in US history (Goldman Sachs, 2015). Though this is a broad categorization and experiences vary for those born in the 1980s versus those in the 1990s, they share the experience of growing up with rapid technological change. The Pew Research Center (2014) describes these "digital natives" as "racially diverse, economically stressed, and politically liberal." They are "confident, connected, open to change" and "upbeat about the nation's future." Study participants demonstrated these traits. For instance, in the Participatory Action Research (PAR) project, they decided to design a website and a Facebook page, and had little trouble doing so. We also communicated between meetings using Facebook, text messages, and GroupMe, a group messaging phone app. Interview responses reflect a general positivity and many ideas for social change. In the journals, participants apply language that is future-oriented and optimistic, e.g. "I look forward to...", "I plan to...", "hopefully...", "I am determined to...", and "I hope to..." They also articulated specific actions that they intend to do in order to set themselves up for their future careers:



- "I need to start building a resume for the future" (A27, F, 16, U visa).
- "I plan to talk to my counselor once again about internships to find what I want in the future" (J10, F, 16, PR).

Preparing for the future is also emphasized and reiterated in schools. As one youth shared: "today I learned about always having a plan or goals" (Z26, F, 16, DACA).

Additionally, the White House Council of Economic Advisors (2014) describe Millennials as valuing community, family, and creativity in their work. This theme runs consistently through my results. Millennials are also encumbered with debt, largely due to increased college costs and reliance on loans to pay for post-secondary education. This looms over the heads of many young people in the US today, including my study participants. The anxiety about paying for college worries parents of children of all ages and make Millennials question whether or not they should or can attend college. Moreover, the White House report states that "Millennials will contend with the effects of starting their careers during a historic downturn for years to come" (p. 23). In other words, labor market uncertainty and the (after-)effects of the global economic crisis and labor market restructuring impacts all youth as they enter a work force that is very different than the one their parents grew up with and rapidly changing, even within their own timeframes.

Participants' views towards work can also be considered characteristic of their generation. For instance, Millennials typically expect a good work-life balance and want a career that is fulfilling and not simply a job to pay the bills (Twenge, 2010; Park and Gursoy, 2012; Taylor, 2013). Study participants echo these trends:

- "I just wanna do something that I love so it's not such a burden, such a bad thing to wake up to every morning" (C29, F, 17, PR).
- "I want to find a job that will thrive myself and that would help me out with what I want to do in life" (D4, M, 16, DACA).
- "I want to do something I like doing, not something for money" (S19, M, 18, DACA).
- "'Work' may not always be something you get paid for but something you do for yourself" (J10, F, 16, PR).

Akin to others their age, participants are mostly working part-time jobs and receiving an hourly wage. These experiences give them valuable insights into different work environments and build skills that will help them in the future. At times, dealing with managers can be challenging:

- "My manager was more worried about the income of the store than the needs of his employees. (...) [He] tried to intimidate my friend by talking about firing him" (S19, M, 18, DACA).
- "He hired me, but didn't keep his word on the schedule. Me being a student, he didn't respect that. So, he was giving me 38 hours, which is two hours away from full time. I had requested only 15 hours. It affected my school and everything" (G7, F, 21, PR).

These are comments with which many workers can relate. However, participants also cite positive experiences and how their efforts are being recognized and rewarded:

- "...my manager gave me my 6-month review. It was really good and he told me that he wants me to be in charge of outdoor section. This is a huge responsibility

but I can handle it. (...) I have demonstrated myself as a good leader and I have gained the trust from my boss" (S19, M, 18, DACA).

- "Today I had a talk with my manager at my job. He asked me how I felt working there and who I did or did not feel comfortable working with. I like the fact that I have a voice in my environment...I do not feel intimidated to speak up...He also asked about his performance and if there were any ways for him to improve in his role in the environment. He let me know that my work is appreciated. He stated that I am one of the hardest workers at my job" (M13, F, 16, DACA).
- "At my job it's positive connections because we help each other. We're friends over there. We're like a family right there. That's my second family right there, because we help each other, we tell everything like 'how's your day.' You can express your feelings there" (Y25, M, 17, DACA).

Such encounters build confidence and leadership, important tools for career success.

The stress and exercise of balancing different tasks, interests, and responsibilities related to family, work, school, friends, and self is also a common experience of youth, particularly in this day and age. Participants process this balancing act and their full lives in the journal entries:

- "...another busy Saturday...a long day ahead of me...I had no time to take a break today. I am super tired and sore from helping people load (...) I woke up at 4am to be at work by 5 (...) The weekend is finally here but I still have to work" (S19, M, 18, DACA).

- "Busy balancing multiple responsibilities: a job interview of that importance while the same day I have an econ exam and multiple assignments due the next day" (A1, M, 21, PR).
- "I am having a hard time with balancing having a job, and keeping up with everything I have to keep up with to stay competitive for medical school" (R18, F, 21, DACA).
- "I made it to work on time today but barely, in the back of my mind I remembered that I still had responsibilities to do for school and home" (Q17, M, 16, DACA).

After Generation Z, Hispanic Millennials make up the second largest Hispanic cohort living in the US, in some major metropolitan areas outnumbering other generations. Non-traditional immigrant gateways are witnessing the fastest Hispanic Millennial growth (Figure 20), and 40% of these young people are foreign-born. These Hispanic Millennials often live in two cultures, which can cause friction with parents and peers who identify mainly with one cultural background (Sensis, 2015). Thus, in addition to generational differences with their parents, they encounter cultural differences (this will be further developed in the section about biculturalism).

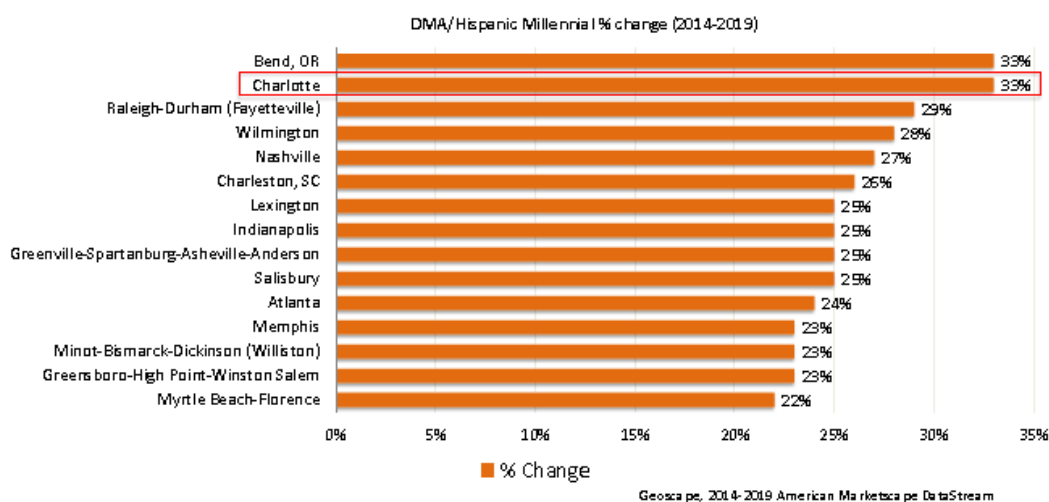


Figure 20: Percent growth of Hispanic Millennials projected 2014-2019

My findings also reflect the experience of Hispanic Millennials across the country. A national survey of Millennials, revealed that foreign-born Hispanic Millennials are more likely than their US-born Hispanic peers to believe that everyone can achieve their dreams if they try hard enough (81% agreed, compared to 75%, 69%, 60% and 70%, respectively), that hard work always pays off (76% agreed, compared to 71%, 67%, 65% and 69%, respectively) (Sensis, 2015). US-born Hispanics still agreed more than their non-Hispanic peers. 82% believed that everyone has the freedom to pursue their dreams, compared to 79% of non-Hispanic White, 77% Asian, and 73% African American Millennials. The researchers claim this is because “second and third generation US-born Hispanic Millennials still respect the sacrifices made by their first-generation parents” (p.36).

The general outlook of Hispanic Millennials (compared to non-Hispanic Millennials) illustrates they are driven by the American Dream (Sensis, 2015). In other words, this appears to be a nation-wide trend and it is so strong that it shows up in a

smaller, in-depth case study with 36 individuals.

Outlook of Hispanic and non-Hispanic Millennials (Sensis, 2015):

	Hispanic	Non-Hispanic
Satisfaction with where they are currently in life	61%	50%
Quality of life is much/somewhat better off than parents	65%	43%
Extremely Optimistic/Optimistic about future	70%	52%
Believe in the American Dream	71%	55%
Strive for American Dream	67%	54%
Want to fit in with the mainstream	49%	30%

Hispanic Millennials also view their opportunities differently than their older co-ethnics:

	Hispanic Millennials	Hispanic 35+
Satisfaction with where they are currently in life	61%	47%
Quality of life is much/somewhat better off than parents	65%	55%
Extremely Optimistic/Optimistic about future	70%	49%
Saving money is easy for me	55%	42%
I want to stand out as a Latino	67%	52%

Hispanic Millennials are hesitant about their financial gains in the future, indicating they are less likely than their non-Hispanic counterparts to believe they can obtain a mortgage. They are, however, about twice as likely as their 35- to 64-year-old co-ethnics to plan on getting life insurance, a mortgage, a 401k, and a saving account (Sensis, 2015). This would assume upward mobility compared to their parents' socio-economic status and also a financial integration into US culture where these financial

products are expected of financially stable adults. Foreign-born Hispanic Millennials are, however, less likely than their US-born peers to believe that they have control over their future (64% vs. 70%) and that “everything works out in the end” (54% vs. 59%) (Sensis, 2015, p. 117). They are driven by hope and the American Dream, but uncertain if or how to achieve their career and other goals.

In addition, there are results in this study that are emblematic of ‘coming of age.’ The transition from adolescence to adulthood is marked by experiences and emotions we can all relate to, including excitement and anxiety about the future, exploring and defining your own identity and interests, and becoming more independent. It involves having your first experiences applying for jobs, working, and earning your own money. The theme of discovering self and starting to make one’s own decisions ran through the data, particularly in the journal entries.

In sum, participants’ views on work may overlap with others of their generation (Hispanic and non-Hispanic) and they represent some of the diversity of this largest, emerging generation. As they are transitioning into the labor force, they are subject to the uncertainties and challenges others encounter, and their creativity and technological abilities will shape our future labor market. Subsequently, based on these similarities with other Millennials, there are findings in this dissertation that hold broader applicability. They can teach us about how other youth in today’s US society navigate the labor market and view their opportunities. At the same time, I discuss factors that are unique to this 1.5-generation Hispanic immigrant youth. These factors may aid in our understanding of the socio-spatial inclusion or exclusion in the labor market.

#### 4.4 Socio-spatial Inclusion

Table 4 provides an overview of the variables that emerged from this research as shaping the socio-spatial inclusion and exclusion of 1.5-generation Hispanic immigrant youth. The first column contains variables that assist youth in their labor market access, whereas the second column shows the main variables restricting full integration. The third column presents factors that proved to have more of an indirect impact or where more contextual rather than central to describing youth experiences. How these elements shape youth labor market integration and interact with one another will be discussed in this chapter. I also frame these experiences within the broader context of Millennials coming of age in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Table 4: Contributors to socio-spatial labor market inclusion and exclusion

<b>Main factors contributing to labor market inclusion</b>	<b>Main factors contributing to labor market exclusion</b>	<b>Indirect and contextual factors</b>
Having a social security number/Importance of DACA	Lack of (permanent) legal status	Household income/SES
Bilingualism (and biculturalism)	Discrimination and stereotypes	Personal characteristics, such as gender and age
Immigrant mentality shaping personality/character (resourceful, determined, hard-working)	Lack of resources, support, and information	Spatial factors: neighborhood of residence, segregation in schools, and transportation
Motivated by family	Restricted job networks	
	Higher education too expensive	

Youth pointed out several factors that enhance their work access and inclusion:



having a social security number, bilingualism, biculturalism, personality and character traits, and family motivations. These will be elaborated on in this section.

When asked to rank the influence of certain factors on their labor market opportunities (Figure 21), youth respondents are primarily optimistic, as indicated by the higher positive response rates. Youth see their bilingualism, biculturalism, connections, personality, and being enrolled in school and on the track towards (graduating from) college as beneficial to their employment options.

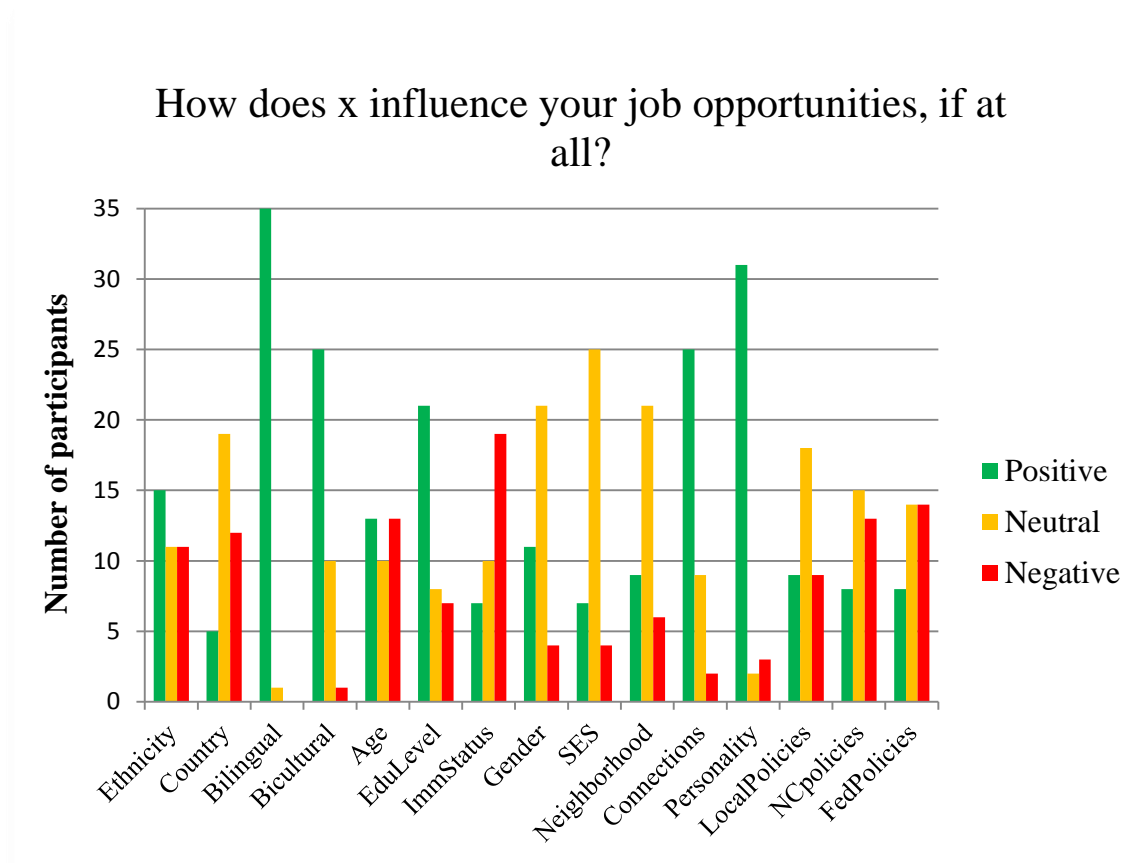


Figure 21: Questionnaire responses, factors influencing youth job opportunities

Interestingly, the questionnaire section in which respondents rank a list of factors that (potentially) influence their job opportunities as positive, neutral, or negative, did not

match always their interview answers. For example, in the questionnaire, ethnicity was ranked as mostly having a positive or neutral impact on labor market access but a number of stories told in the interviews would suggest otherwise. The positive effects of being bilingual, bicultural and having a 'positive' personality indeed also came up in the interviews. The high positive ranking for connections can be attributed to the high number of participants who were indeed able to obtain (part-time) work through friends, family, or others – even though it may not be for the job they ultimately wish to acquire. The high positive ranking for education level is because all but two (older) participants were still enrolled in school (high school, community college, or a four-year college) and they aspire to obtain at least a Bachelor's degree.

Many youth participants have been able to secure (part-time) jobs and are hopeful about their future. They highlight the following assets as ones they bring to the labor market and as ones that have helped them obtain jobs so far:

#### 4.4.1 Having a Social Security Number/Importance of DACA

Permanent residents and citizens have a significant advantage compared to those who are undocumented or have a temporary visa, as recognized by participants:

- "...it is all based on me doing what I have to do. Because I have papers" (I35, M, 16, PR).
- "Being a resident is really, really helpful, and it kind of gives me more security and confidence in the things that I do" (I9, M, 16, PR).
- "I was very fortunate to come in the country legally so that made things a lot easier, accessing college, getting my driver's license (...) those opportunities to study abroad wouldn't have been there, being in college probably not as well. Although

we're middle class and my family is stable, they wouldn't be able to pay out of state tuition, out of pocket for me to come here" (A1, M, 21, PR).

Still, even permanent residents express some form of uncertainty regarding their ability to access all jobs and belong fully in the US, e.g. "interning at a U.S. Embassy" (A1, M, 21, PR) and "I can't vote in government. (...) I can't hold political offices up to a certain level" (G7, F, 21, PR). Also, "[if] I do a crazy thing, then I could easily be deported" (J10, F, 16, PR).

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) has benefitted youth in various ways, particularly their access to jobs and a driver's license, both of which open doors to labor market integration. Youth are grateful for the opportunity to gain work experience in diverse fields and gain spatial mobility:

- "...before I had the Deferred thing, you can't get a job, you can't get a license, you can't do anything" (L12, M, 17, DACA).
- "I have a friend who, he worked during high school and after high school he worked at Bojangles for 4 or 5 years and after he got the benefit of DACA, he was able to work at a bank as a teller, but then he got promoted" (A1, M, 21, PR).
- "...once I got my documents, I was able to get a job, I was able to get my driver's license so my dad doesn't have to drive all the time and I could work then, which means I can help with the house income. So that's really helped me" (D30, F, 17, DACA).

The acknowledgement of their presence and the heavily reduced chance of deportation has drastically shifted the way youth with DACA go about their daily life:

- "I'm not scared to go out anymore" (U21, F, 20, DACA).

- "college-wise, I don't know why but when they asked social security number, I put it there so they know that I'm here in this country legally and not illegal" (D30, F, 17, DACA).
- "[DACA] made me feel safer because I knew for myself I didn't have to worry about getting arrested and deported. (...) there are places that hire even if you are undocumented but I didn't want to take that chance and have something bad happen. So I was just waiting and waiting" (E31, F, 19, DACA).
- "[DACA] drastically changed my life. Because now I felt more empowered. I can now get a car, I can now have two jobs, and it made me more confident about what I can and can't do" (F32, M, 21, DACA).

For those who have been living 'in the shadows' for years, DACA has provided access to experiences essential in the 'coming of age' phase, such as obtaining employment, earning your own money, and getting a driver's license. Even seemingly minor benefits, such as going to the movies and proving you are above 18, is now possible with a US identification card. Beyond that, being protected from deportation has drastic effects on migrants' daily lives: they can move more freely and their anxiety diminishes. Improved social and spatial mobility also means youth are more likely to get involved in their schools and communities. Lastly, obtaining a social security number is symbolic because it recognizes people as official members of society. It is therefore a significant step toward inclusion. With fear removed and new confidence gained, youth can set higher aspirations for themselves:

- "I can work at places where they have eVerify because I have a social security that is verified, to be legit and to be actually from the government. Not everybody has that chance but I do. (...) Now my goal is to go to college" (D4, M, 16, DACA).
- "I wouldn't be working on campus. I wouldn't have been able to build the connections that I have made. I wouldn't have . . . probably wouldn't have even figured out what it is that I actually wanted to do with my career" (N14, F, 21, DACA).
- "I got more involved in school. I started staying more after school. At first I didn't care about school but now I do. I would stay more after school, do extra work, got extracurricular activities, learning more about colleges and scholarships. Now I'm at the point where I could get a scholarship to go to college so those are some big things for me" (T20, F, 18, DACA).

#### 4.4.2 Bilingualism

Youth are able to leverage their bilingualism in professional situations in multiple ways and across industries. This puts them at an advantage in comparison to their monolingual English-speaking peers and even more so to their monolingual Spanish-speaking peers.

I expected that bilingualism would be an asset but I did not anticipate gathering as many examples of youth obtaining jobs because they were bilingual.

- "...they noticed that I speak three language, so they were like 'oh we really like you!' We have a very diverse community that goes through this Office Depot" (F6, F, 19, TPS).
- "[Being bilingual] has gotten me all of my jobs, actually" (N14, F, 21, DACA).

- "...they hired me as a Spanish liaison because they were trying to start up a program with CNA certification, but fully in Spanish. (...) she told me later, at American Eagle, that was the reason she hired me because she was getting a lot of Spanish speaking people and she didn't have any people to treat them" (R18, F, 21, DACA).

Youth are hired to interact with Spanish-speaking customers and sometimes also to interact with English-speaking clients when other employees do not speak English, thereby opening up their company's client base.

- "It is a Mexican restaurant and you would speak mostly Spanish but not all, which is the reason why they hired me, because I was bilingual and they had some customers come in that didn't speak Spanish so that was my purpose of being there" (C29, F, 17, PR).
- "...if I didn't work there [at Dominos], they would lose so many customers. So many. And I know it's not just there, it's anywhere, whether it's a pharmacy, a Walmart" (C3, F, 17, DACA)
- "...they were very desperate about finding bilinguals. (...) I have access to more than one community through knowing both languages. A lot of people see that and they want to use that" (G7, F, 21, PR).

Bilingualism with Spanish (rather than another language) is particularly helpful in the US due to the size of the Spanish-speaking population (Linton, 2004). There is also a broader sense of how more bilingual employees helps the Hispanic community. Latinos with limited English abilities appreciate having the option to speak Spanish:

- "I've worked for a doctor. He wanted a translator and I helped out a lot of ladies at a school" (Z26, F, 16, DACA).
- "...in Japanese restaurants you don't see a lot of Hispanics that walk in, but there are some that have. They're like 'thank god, somebody speaks Spanish. We can't understand the menu, we don't know what this comes with.' Especially whenever the other staff can't speak Spanish, I'm there to help them. It's a positive. They always tip me on the side for helping them" (E5, F, 20, undoc).
- "...with the retail jobs I have had if there is another Latino family that comes in, instead of going to my co-worker, they would come to me because I looked Latina" (N14, F, 21, DACA).

Youth also provide ample examples of acting as interpreters between Spanish-speaker and English-speaking employees and the benefits of that skill set:

- "...my friend's dad, he didn't speak English and my friend didn't speak English too because he had just gotten to the US, so I had to talk to the boss for them, for every worker there, I had to talk to him. And they were like: thanks, man, you really helped. It's good being bilingual" (B28, M, 16, undoc).
- "Since I talk English, I'm in the front, taking the customers. And most of the people that work there only speak Spanish" (H34, M, 19, DACA).
- "I work with my dad but I also sometimes work with a friend of mine and my dad. He doesn't really know how to speak English. I guess being bilingual helps, I talk to the client and he knows something about the lawn that I haven't noticed or

there is something, a suggestion that should be put out there, I can really communicate and get that trust and communication between the client and the business" (I9, M, 16, PR).

With a substantial number of first-generations in the local labor force, 1.5-generation and second-generation bilingual youth act as valuable interpreters between immigrants and non-immigrants, Latinos and non-Latinos, Spanish- and English-speaking Charlotteans. On one hand, there is the argument that bilinguals offer businesses the opportunity to tap into a more diverse local and international clientele and can make Latinos feel more welcome. Bilingual youth may therefore be more desirable hires than their mono-lingual peers:

“From the view of the segmented assimilation model, an economic benefit of bilingualism is plausible for several reasons. First, fluency in both languages can widen the range of commercial and service opportunities in both ethnic and general markets (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001). Second, businesses in the global economy want to hire workers with multiple-language skills who can navigate international markets readily. Finally, the increasing immigrant population will raise the demand for bilingual workers, especially in the public sector, to serve non-English speakers (Waldinger and Lichter, 2003)” (Shin and Alba, 2009, p.255).

Portes and Rumbaut (2006) also find that 1.5- and second-generation Cuban and Korean bilinguals can thrive in entrepreneurial ethnic enclaves because they have access to both ethnic and general markets.

In some cases, this may translate into higher wages as well:

- "...in the Fire Department I was looking that, for having a foreign language it's a 5% increase in salary" (C3, F, 17, DACA).
- "I'm actually paid above the normal pay rate because of [being bilingual]" (G7, F, 21, PR).



- "...maybe in the air force I can become a translator because that's . . . I've heard from my ROTC instructor that's really a high pay, translator" (L12, M, 17, DACA).
- "...my teacher said that if you're bilingual or trilingual, you can earn like an extra dollar on your check. We had an example, I think doctor. I think they earn an extra \$80 just for being bilingual" (V22, F, 16, DACA).

On the other hand, there is currently no large-scale data to back that up. The economic payoffs of bilingualism – especially in the US English-Spanish context – remain understudied. Fry and Lowell (2003), using 1992 data, found that bilingual skills do not make any significant contributions to weekly wages. Bilinguals' wages in the US were higher than those of their monolingual peers, but that was due to human capital differences, such as higher educational attainment. Another national-level study using 2000 Census data found no greater economic returns to bilingualism among 1.5-generation and US-born Asian and Hispanic bilingual workers compared to their English monolingual co-ethnics (Sin and Alba, 2009). In the US, learning English as a Spanish-speaker has much greater benefits than English speakers learning Spanish (McGroarty, 1990) and there are large wage differentials for workers who have limited English proficiency (Shin and Alba, 2009). Even within this, the benefits of learning English vary by occupational setting, gender, and geography (McGroarty, 1990). Speaking a language other than English is even becoming "a source of conflict in America's workplaces" (Colon, 2012, p.227) or a "disability" (Mirande, 1996). For Mexicans, Chinese and Filipinos, there may be an economic penalty to their bilingualism, which can potentially be explained by discrimination or ethnic residential segregation (Shin and Alba, 2009).

Between 1998 and 2002, the number of complaints filed with the Equal Employment Commission (EEOC) against companies implementing English-only policies rose by 500% (Colon, 2012). Such rules are particularly targeting Spanish speakers and Latinos (Mirande, 1996). In other words, being bilingual may help obtaining a job (as frequently demonstrated by my participants), but there is no evidence to support the argument that bilingualism translates into higher wages overall. As Shin and Alba (2009, p.271) stated: “it is possible that additional employment opportunities could be available for bilingual workers even though they earn less than their English monolingual counterpart.” This appears to be the case in my study, but could use further examination.

According to my respondents, the full benefits of bilingualism can only be reaped if one is truly bilingual, has no accent when speaking English, and it does not automatically help in all companies or jobs:

- "I actually went to career fairs first because they have a lot at CPCC, and I tell them I'm bilingual and everything. The only place I saw that had an impact, just from how people were talking to me, is the tax, the HR. The other places I talked to, Time Warner Cable, I talked to Sprint, Verizon, the guys kept telling me, I think it was Time Warner Cable, something like that, he said we really don't need a lot of that, he told me straight to my face. He said: we just need somebody who speaks English" (O15, F, 21, DACA).
- "...being bilingual, especially fluently bilingual and not this choppy mess that they call being bilingual now, is getting lost. Because a lot of the parents are working more and the kids are getting raised by themselves and they're speaking more English and they're not really being able to practice that Spanish to keep it

native, keep it crisp. And then they go to school and they get exempt from Spanish class that would teach them the basics that yeah, even though you might know how to kind of speak it, you don't understand what it actually means to be fully fluent" (R18, F, 21, DACA).

- "I can sorta speak Spanish. I can read it. But I can't write it. It just feels like I'm not really bilingual" (W23, M, 16, DACA).

Thus, there are nuances and caveats to English-Spanish bilingualism benefits. The bilingual advantage is diminished if the level or nature of Spanish (writing, reading, speaking), is not at the professional level expected in the work place. The level of Spanish fluency is often not specified in large data sets (Shin and Alba, 2009). For lower-wage jobs, this may not be an issue, but for professional-level jobs it will be. Moreover, for profession-level jobs, solely being bilingual will not help if the individual does not have the education and human capital required for that position. Immigrant youth may therefore only fully harness the potential benefits of their bilingualism in the mainstream professional labor market if they obtain a higher education degree.

Furthermore, it is critical to think about the positionality of bilingual youth in the labor force and the motives of companies for hiring them or the way bilingualism interplays with ethnicity:

- "...it can go either way. You can say: hey, you can connect to the Latino community and we want them, we want their business and stuff, but it's more that they want you for money and what you can provide, rather than who you are and your work ethic. It's one of those things where it's great if you are bilingual but it's not so good that you're Latino, in some cases" (Q17, M, 16, undoc).

If being bilingual only helps in lower-wage jobs, if bilinguals are expected to perform additional tasks without extra pay, if bilinguals are only seen as tools to tap into the Latino wallets, or if the colloquial and partial nature of 1.5- and second-generation immigrants' Spanish is not deemed sufficient, this asset may back-fire.

#### 4.4.3. Biculturalism

Though not always recognized as significant, youth's position of being born abroad (with foreign-born parents) but raised in the US puts them in a unique position of not only knowing two cultures, but having to 'code switch' on a daily basis. This can translate into a well-developed ability to adapt to new or unfamiliar situations.

Generational differences were a common theme across nodes and pertain to how youth view themselves and their aspirations. This became apparent when youth participants described their relationship with their parents. There is an appreciation for their parents' sacrifices and culture but there is also a disconnect which is common in families with first-generation immigrant parents. One participant articulates that "I come from a Mexican family and when I'm outside the house I'm in a different world" (B28, M, 16, undoc). In addition to a generational divide, there is a cultural rift. Though this may cause tensions within the family unit, it is not necessarily a negative phenomenon. Parents pass on their culture to their children, thereby keeping it alive. At the same time, youth can act as a bridge between their parents and host society, informing their parents about the US context. As one participant articulates:

- "She [my sister] was born here. But her struggle's slightly different because she is American, she's known the culture her whole life. But, there is a cultural block in that she's disconnected from both her parents' culture and her native culture in

America. I think for her it's a different struggle that's just as bad. (...) They try to group us up into all Latinos and all immigrants, but native born is not the same as those who came young. It's a different challenge. Because, when you're a first generation your parents are figuring it out at the same time as you're figuring it out. You're still . . . you're pressured to be at your parents level and help them along the way as both of you are learning. Those who were born here, their parents were already settled down, usually they're second generation or third generation, so the family is already acclimated to the culture from their home country to this country, rather than me being the first one trying to figure it out, how am I going to do this?" (G7, F, 21, PR).

At the same time, these bi-cultural, Latino identities create opportunities to relate to others in the same situation: "With my Hispanic friends, we're very...we understand each other a lot more than I do with my American friends because even though some of them were born here, they sometimes still face the same struggles as a normal immigrant, based on ethnicity" (D30, F, 17, DACA). These connections extend to immigrants across race/ethnicity, gender, documentations status based on the common experiences of migration:

- "...that unites us because of the similarity of what causes that struggle is coming here from a different country" (G7, F, 21, PR). "
- [My professor] still has that mentality of an immigrant, which was astonishing to me because I always felt that at a certain time you lose that mentality. But she was like, 'No. It's actually something that helps you throughout your life because at the end of the day you realize you're not the same as them.' Regardless, whether

you want to take it positive or negative, you're not the same and you just have to take it as it is and make it benefit you in some type of way" (R18, F, 21, DACA).

- "...at least one common thing we have is being from another country and coming to America" (X24, F, 16, citizen).

Only a few participants expressed how their biculturalism has (potential) benefits in the work force, e.g. by relating to and interacting with Hispanic customers.

- "...if you're able to recognize someone's culture, you're able to understand certain aspects that provide them strengths like . . . because of how their culture works and how they're brought up, that provides them strengths that are going to translate into the work place and their work ethic, something that is kind of going to be more appealing to employers" (R18, F, 21, DACA).

Three participants suggested that their biculturalism is not influential in their labor market access at all:

- "I don't think it [biculturalism] has too much to do with getting a job, I don't think it really impacts me, because I've grown up here" (K11, F, 16, PR).

Participants, like most of the general population, think of culture as a series of behaviors, traditions, and customs. If we understand culture as collective programming of the mind distinguishing one group from the other (Hofstede, 1993), this includes conscious and unconscious behaviors, including attitudes, priorities, and perceptions (Figure 22). There are many variations of Hall's (1976, 1989) Cultural Iceberg model, including:

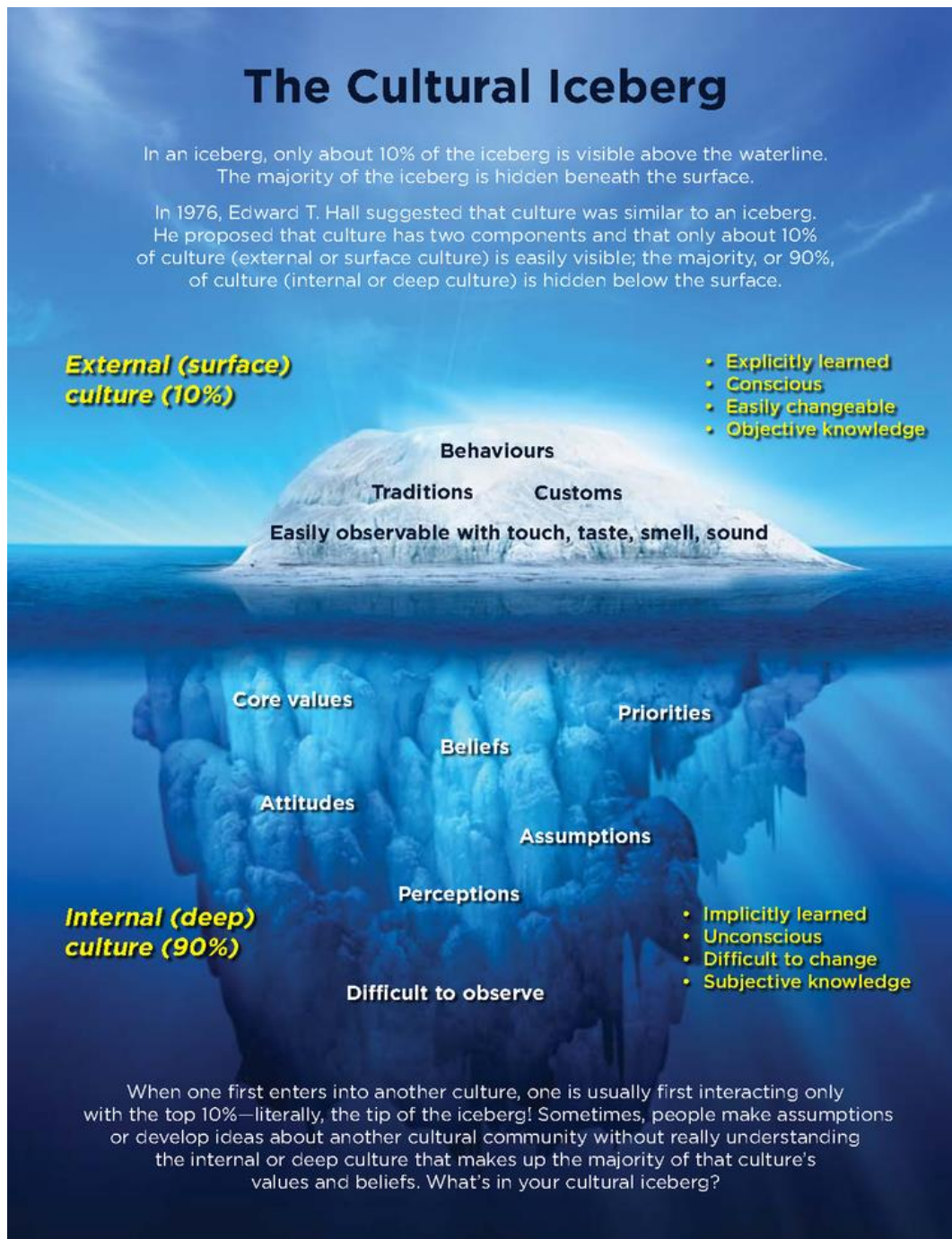


Figure 22: The cultural iceberg model, portraying external and internal culture. Source: Hanson, 2014

According to this model, the references participants make to culture are surface-based, such as food and celebrations, rather than examples of deep culture:

- "We celebrate Halloween, Dia de los Muertos, all saints day, we celebrate Thanksgiving, 4th of July, you know. The tacos are right next to the hot dogs" (F32, M, 21, DACA).
- "I'm an America and I have Spanish, well, Hispanic culture in me. Like, every summer, I go to Bolivia. We do different things that we do here than we do over there. Yeah, I think that's what it [being bicultural] means to me. I'm not sure. (...) Over there, it's very different the way people dress over here. Stuff like that. Food... over there, you see them eat like five times a day. Over here, they eat three times a day" (I35, M, 16, PR).

For this reason, they may underestimate the beneficial impacts of being bicultural.

Participants also make the argument that it is not necessarily their biculturalism itself that improves their job opportunities, but the open-mindedness and adaptability you bring as a results of having to 'manage' two cultural worlds. Thus, by being an immigrant and an outsider, they have learned to adapt to others:

- "...it's just the assets you bring. You know, you bring different experiences, especially if you're not born in the United States. Not only have you been in a different country, but you understand different ways of thinking or you know, different ways of just . . . different settings and I think that's a major asset" (A1, M, 21, PR).
- "Being bicultural I have two different perspectives because I see outside the box, I see: well, what about the countries in Africa or the countries in Asia, what about them? Let's not think about North America, let's think about the people out there,



you know. They are facing different situations than we face" (D30, F, 17, DACA).

- "...it makes me more open minded about not just my culture but somebody else's culture" (G33, M, 16, DACA).
- "Being tolerant of someone else's culture is a great thing that we as a Latino population have grown to understand" (Q17, M, 16, undoc).

Rightfully, respondents also made the valid point that there are too many cultures in Latin America for biculturalism to be meaningful (in work settings):

- "You can be from the same country and still have a different culture so that's not really a difference. Also, people have difference cultures when you don't even see it" (D4, M, 16, DACA).
- "One of them might be Christian, one of them is Catholic, one might talk a certain way and one might talk a different way" (T20, F, 18, DACA).

In a study with 123 Latino immigrant adolescents, Birman (1998, p.344) found that "biculturalism may be difficult to attain," because "American acculturation was significantly negatively related to Hispanic acculturation." Depending on which culture was most developed ('American' (non-Latino) vs. 'Hispanic'), respondents felt more accepted by that social group. Birman also tentatively suggests that biculturalism may be related positive self-perceptions of self-worth. Besides potential labor market benefits, biculturalism and maintaining a positive attachment to one's ethnic identity<sup>22</sup> is positively related to self-esteem (Bat-Chava and Steen, 1995; Crocker et al., 1994; Phinney, 1992;

---

<sup>22</sup> According to Nagel (1994, p.152), "[i]dentity and culture are two of the basic building blocks of ethnicity."

Wright, 1985) and educational success (Phinney et al, 2001; Phalet et al., 2004). “When adolescents have negative attitudes or are unclear or uncommitted to their ethnicity, their self-esteem is lower” (Phinney, et al., 1997, p. 178).

#### 4.4.4. Personality and Character Traits

Almost all respondents said they believe their personality helps them secure a job (Figure 21). Such traits include ambition, good social skills, and a sense of agency and personal responsibility. The majority claimed that their “positive personality” (out-going, friendly, e.g.) will help obtain work:

- "I like to socialize and meet people, even if it's brief conversations. I think that helps a lot. Especially, I guess in business where networking is very important to meet a lot of people" (A1, M, 21, PR).
- "I work hard in everything I do so once they get to know my traits, they like me. That's helped me get, continue jobs or get better jobs. Or get better resources" (U21, F, 20, DACA).
- "My brother tells me: you make friends everywhere you go (...) If they didn't see my face, if they just heard what I think and my views, I'm pretty sure I'd get the job quickly" (X24, F, 16, citizen).

Participants also attribute many of their characteristics (hard-working, determined, adaptable, open-minded, e.g.) to their (undocumented) immigrant experience, and they add that these traits make them more marketable, because they feel these traits are desirable to employers. This ties back to the previous point about biculturalism.

- "I get adapted to anything and every environment" (C29, F, 17, PR).

- "I feel like I'm very malleable when it comes to my environment because I was always uncertain wherever I was. If I was at school, not to be too Hispanic. If I was at home, not too American. So I always had that challenge. I feel that affects my personality" (G7, F, 21, PR).
- "...a lot of us really are hard working. A lot of us are bilingual, we are really adaptable to the environment we are put in and essentially we make the best of what we can" (Q17, M, 16, undoc).

Many of the traits and associated benefits mentioned by youth could apply to anyone. In this way, their experience is more common to all youth. At the same time, they specifically attribute their immigrant experience to the development of these traits. This is not too surprising, considering almost every immigrant story is a story of struggle, perseverance, and sacrifice. Through hard work and determination, immigrants learn to make ends meet and even thrive in a new, unfamiliar society. This sentiment is particularly strong among first-generation immigrants but is apparently also adapted by the 1.5-generation, who – in turn – claim much of this is lost by their US-born second-generation siblings and counterparts. A report from the National Council of La Raza on second-generation Latino youth ages 18 to 24 in LA and Chicago discovered that having a strong work ethic, ambition, perseverance and flexibility were personal characteristics indicating resilience (Foxen, 2015).

Though statistical evidence of this phenomenon is lacking, one study comparing Parsees in Sydney (an immigrant group) to Parsees in Bombay, Australians, and Indians, found that Sydney Parsees scored lower on anxiety and on lying than the compare groups. Sydney Parsees also scored higher on ambition than their Bombay and Australian

counterparts, but lower than Indians in general (Ray, 1986). Similar studies with different populations and in different countries would provide a stronger understanding of the extent to which immigrant traits may be significantly different from non-immigrants’.

Participants of this study articulate that, in order to adapt to mainstream US society, they had to make extra efforts and balance their heritage often unfamiliar to most US-born White Americans. The (ongoing) process of doing this has cultivated a sense of flexibility. The adjective ‘hard-working’ particularly reflects a necessity as well as a cliché. Due to additional struggles and obstacles immigrants face relative to most US-born Americans, they have no choice but to work hard. First-generation immigrants with lower educational attainment in particular, often end up working long hours in sub-optimal working conditions in order to feed their family – again, hard work is demanded. As discussed later, the image of the ‘hard-working immigrant’ is also a stereotype that can be abused by employers. The same could apply to other character traits, such as adaptability, as – if pushed far enough – it can become an excuse to treat immigrant workers differently from US-born workers.

It is impressive that youth are able to express how their experience as 1.5-generation immigrants (often described in more negative terms and struggles) translates into positive traits. In other words, youth turn their challenges into something positive and that in and of itself is an attribute that can help them in the work force and other aspects of their life. Their emphasis on the importance of their personality and character in accessing work demonstrates a sense of personal agency, resourcefulness and resilience. A potential pitfall here is undermining factors beyond one’s control. Though hard work is often key to success, the US cultural notion of "pulling yourself up by your

own bootstraps" fails to recognize that some people have more opportunities than others. Poor people are not looked at as victims of structural inequality but rather as those who failed to take advantage of opportunities. Consequently, they are held personally responsible for their poverty (Kluegel and Smith, 1986). Adapting this perspective can be detrimental if personal characteristics do not pay off in the ways anticipated.

#### 4.4.5. Family Motivations

Though there were significant variations among participants' opinions and experiences, everyone talked about how their parents came to the US for the children to have a better life, which is a common narrative among immigrant families. Getting an education and taking advantage of opportunities your parents may not have had, motivates youth to do well.

The expectation of upward mobility is a shared story of migrants moving to the US. Parents move for their children's future and the hopes of better educational and job prospects. The extent to what that becomes reality or is being realized is still playing out for many Latin American and first-generation American families. How this is experienced by youth themselves is examined in this study. From the participants' perspective, they are largely motivated by their family, to make their parents proud and act as a role model for younger siblings.

- "I know my parents have worked hard to get me where I am now and I have to keep going, keep working hard, become more successful every day, and to not just strive for me but to strive for my family. Not all of us have the same immigration status" (C3, F, 17, DACA).

- "...we, us Hispanics, get a lot of motivation from our parents. Our parents pressure...they don't pressure us but they constantly tell us that they want better for us, they want everything better for us, they want us to have a better life than them, so that is definitely good motivation" (H8, F, 16, DACA).
- "I have to set an example for everybody just because our parents weren't able to have papers, they weren't able to get a good education, it doesn't mean that we have to be the same way. And I feel like that's what we as Hispanics have to set an example people who have gone... to help people see that not everybody is not like that" (I35, M, 16, PR).

Getting an education is a central component of the expectation many migrant parents have for their children; after all, the prospect of more economic and educational opportunities for their children is a primary motivator to migrate to the US (Perreira et al, 2008).

- "My mom was like: no, you have to go to school. Why should I go to school? I'm not gonna get nowhere? That was my mindset. She's like: no, you need to get out of that" (T20, F, 18, DACA).
- "...my parents' decision too, but I think it's set in high school that, in order to live happy and have money, you have to go to college, that's what they say" (S19, M, 18, DACA).
- "...the fact that I'm still able to see my dad leave every day at 7am and come back at 7pm. To see that he's still able to work and still has to strive to provide for us, and the fact that he tells me 'your only job is school. That's your job. I don't care what money you're making over there, your job is school. That's always going to

be your main job.’ That’s always just kind of been the motivation for me" (R18, F, 21, DACA).

That said, these expectations can put a lot of responsibility on youth as well, because there is so much at stake.

- "I have a large load based on...I wouldn’t blame it on my parents but the reason why my parents came to the United States was because of me. They wanted me to have a better education, to learn better than what they learned in their country, to have new experiences, and to just have a better future. And so they sacrificed a lot for me. So now, it's like a burden for me, in way, because I have to "be perfect", I can’t mess up because if I mess up, they are probably going to think: we came to a foreign country for you and then you mess up. Why did you do this to us? So, I always try the best I can be" (D30, F, 17, DACA).

Commitment to family also influences when youth start to pursue employment and to what types of work they aspire because “Familial responsibility plays a key role in the financial landscape of Hispanic Millennials” (Sensis, 2015: 65). A study with Latino youth in LA and Chicago discovered that, even though some youth came from dysfunctional homes and they all faced struggles associated with living in an immigrant family, some youth attributed their resilient traits to their family, e.g. traditional values passed on by their parents and the expectations of responsibility and solidarity towards the family (Foxen, 2015).

#### 4.5 Lack of (Permanent) Legal Status

“Perhaps the most obvious limitation is the lack of research on the consequences of undocumented status,” Landale, McHale and Booth (2008, p.352) argued. This

dissertation helps fill this gap. The most direct and impactful way immigrant youth are excluded from the labor market is if they lack a social security number. My results confirm existing literature that, for the 1.5-generation, “those who are undocumented may experience significant challenges to their upward mobility” (Terriquez, 2014, p.392) and that documentation status overrides many other variables (e.g. SES, neighborhood) in influencing work access. Controlling for SES, age, and gender (“key determinants of youths’ mobility trajectories” (p.392), Terriquez’s analysis indicated that the undocumented 1.5-generation in California exhibited low odds of attending four-year colleges and employment, and high odds of being out of school and out of work, though results were not statistically significant. As one participant puts it: "The main thing is my immigration status. I think if I had one, I would be somewhere right now. Having a better job, I would be in school already. That’s my main problem. Other than that, I feel pretty confident that I could get the job I wanted, I just don’t have an immigration status to do so" (E5, F, 20, undoc). With eVerify and stricter enforcements, it has become harder to apply for and secure employment without that nine-digit number. Yet, there is a certain complexity that lies behind this seemingly straight-forward notion:

- a. Undocumented migrants can still find work; in fact, the majority have to work in order to survive in the US.
  - "My dad is basically the one who got me in [on my construction job], because that’s what he works in. I’m working under his name" (B2, M, 17, DACA).
  - “...my dad, he’s worked in so many places and he’s made a good impression of himself, so everybody really enjoys with him. So they’re like ‘Oh your daughter can come and work with us" (E5, F, 20, undoc).



- b. Lacking a social security number not only limits work opportunities but also volunteer opportunities.

One participant, who had applied for DACA, but was still waiting to hear back about his request, shared that: "I found an internship down at the local clinic (...) this is only to volunteer, this isn't to work, I just want the experience of it. But without my work permit yet I can't, it's not possible. It hurts a little to know I can't have that opportunity, to know that I'm equipped to do this job much like the next person but I can't take it. All because of some numbers" (Q17, M, 16, undoc<sup>23</sup>). Although some undocumented youth will volunteer to gain experience in their fields of interest, not all agencies will accept undocumented volunteers.

- c. Documentation status is a fluid, rather than static, concept.

The US immigration system is a highly complex conglomerate of laws, agencies, and forms. The process to change status can happen overnight (e.g. a visa expires) or take over a decade. Many youth have transitioned status over time and some were at some point, or still are, unaware of their status.

- "...we came with tourist visas and then we overstayed them. But I know that we recently got new visas, but I don't know what it's called. (...) there was a time period where I didn't have documentation status" (A27, F, 16, U visa).
- "Because I am married to an American citizen, I'm trying to do it that way" (E5, F, 20, undoc).

---

<sup>23</sup>At the time of the interview, his DACA application was still pending. By the time he participated in the PAR project, he had received his DACA and secured two jobs.

- "...it was changed to the law of Cuban Adjustment, so even though I'm just here under an adjustment, I'm still a "refugee." (G7, F, 21, PR).
- "I was undocumented for a while when I was here, my mom told me, but I don't have much memory of when I was considered a US citizen" (X24, F, 16, citizen).

The example provided in the introduction was of a participant who secured her DACA once the original policy passed and started working, in addition to staying involved with local advocacy. Eager to become a teacher, she enrolled in classes at a community college. However, when she renewed her DACA, the process took much longer than anticipated. She submitted her request for renewal in March, 2015 and was still waiting for re-approval in January, 2016. The lag meant her previous DACA expired and she was forced to stop working and taking classes. Being the determined person she is, she continued her volunteer advocacy work, but realized this was not a long-term option. Falling in and out of status is detrimental to youth's education and job opportunities, which defeats the purpose of DACA, and limits labor market integration for this group. Unfortunately, this case is not unique: service providers across US metropolitan areas reported "DACA recipients who have submitted renewals on time have lost their jobs" (Singer et al, 2015, p.24).

- d. Even with DACA, employers may be hesitant or reject to hire people.

In effect, DACA recipients are still not considered legal residents, even with a social security number. Not only do immigrants and their families sometimes struggle to navigate the immigration system, employers/companies are also misinformed or not informed enough about changes in the law that affect them. As a result, even with a valid social security number, youth may be forced to 'out' themselves to their (potential)

employer and risk being rejected (i.e. excluded). This is concerning and another barrier to employment access.

- "...some jobs just kind of don't want you, they're just 'Oh yeah no, we can't really risk it. What if this happens,' and a lot of employers are against DACA because they didn't want that new work force in there to get jobs, to be put in their companies, so they'll just deny you" (B2, M, 17, DACA).
- "When I first applied, when they asked me for my social security, I issued to them my social security but since it is not a US citizen issued, they questioned why my status. They said the social security was not valid and I was like: that's why I have my employment card. They had to process that all over again. And that's part of why...how do I say, like a...that could have been a stop for me to actually have that job. Like, I had to wait longer than I already had waited to actually finish the whole application process when I was applying there. And I know I was not the only one who had to go through that, too" (C3, F, 17, DACA).
- "...we had a bank come to the university to hire students and I presented my situation and they said 'we can't hire people with visas because we can't sponsor them' and I told them 'we don't have visas, you don't have to sponsor us, we have employment'. We went back and forth, trying to figure something out (...) It's a new category so they don't know how to handle that and they didn't want to take the risk" (F32, M, 21, DACA).
- "...when I first started working at Target and my CNA, e-verify kicked me back saying that I wasn't allowed. That I didn't have any employment status. And I had

to email the government like ‘hey you gave me this’ and it took about a good two or three weeks to get everything straightened out" (R18, F, 21, DACA).

Such employer hesitancy is not mentioned in either of the two Migration Policy Institute reports about DACA at the two-year mark (Batalova et al, 2014) and DACA’s implementation and impact on education and training success at the local level (Hooker et al, 2015). A 2015 Brookings Institute publication about local insights from DACA confirms that “both employers and employees may perceive risks regarding changes to work authorization status (Singer et al, 2015, p.26). Referring to the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA), the authors suggest that “many employers may prefer to maintain the status quo regarding their employees and worry that accepting a change in an employee’s status might catch the eyes of immigration enforcement. This contrasts with younger DACA applicants, many of whom are entering the workforce for the first time” (p.26). My findings would argue that this employer reluctance is already the case for DACA recipients. The report does mention that USCIS rarely reached out to employers with information about the DACA work authorization program, which may explain (part of) the employer reluctance and confusion about DACA and that “USCIS should engage in a more direction discussion with employers in advance” (p.26), should DAPA become implemented.

It is difficult for DACA recipients and DACA-eligible individuals and their families to advocate for themselves, if employers, legal services, educators, and social service providers are under-informed or misinformed about DACA, or are unwilling to provide such information or partner with organizations that provide this information due to the controversial nature of this program (Hooker et al, 2015). DACA was put in place

to allow undocumented youth who came to the US when they were young to work and go to school. To a large extent, this has been achieved. However, three years into the program, youth continue to run into some barriers to full labor market inclusion. My finding that employers may be hesitant or reject to hire DACA recipients contributes to existing literature evaluating the implementation of DACA and offers a tale of caution for similar programs in the future, such as DAPA. It is essential that employers are well-informed about work authorization policies to ensure equal job opportunities for DACAmented youth.

Consequently, "DACA is not enough," youth say. The limitations of DACA include:

- a. Exclusion from certain jobs, for instance in the military or requiring certain accreditations.
  - "I actually initially wanted to be in the military as an EMT but because of my status that wasn't possible" (C3, F, 17, DACA).
  - "I also have the dream of going into the Navy, being a linguist. And probably doing something with business as well, within the Navy. I'm limited to that and I was shut out of it" (D4, M, 16, DACA).
  - "Because of DACA not being an official status, the MCAT association isn't allowing them to take the MCAT. (...) DACA to me is sort of like getting invited to a party, but you're only able to look through the window. You see everything that you could be, but you can't really go inside" (R18, F, 21, DACA).
- b. Uncertainty about the future, because DACA is a temporary visa and not a lawful status.

- "...it's still a temporary thing. You know it could go away and go back to where it was" (J36, M, 21, DACA).
- "...right now just with DACA and there's really nothing set in stone for me so having to think about whether if I could even apply for jobs later on or if I could even stay in the United States afterwards or even be able to work in a university with the status that I have" (N14, F, 21, DACA).
- "Everything is just in the dark for us; we're stuck between what we can do and what we're not allowed to do. It's like going on a path and you don't know what's going on, if there's a stop or if there's anything. All you have to hope is that you find something." (P16, F, 18, DACA).
- "I'm scared that they are going to take the DACA away. To me, if that gets taken away, do I get deported? Can I still be here? Do I still get my rights? (...) I don't want my rights taken away. I want to stay here. You can't just throw me away" (T20, F, 18, DACA).

- c. Stigma and discrimination around not having a lawful, permanent status and that being evident on official documents, such as a North Carolina driver's license.

In September, 2012, the North Carolina Department of Transportation banned Deferred Action recipient from obtaining a driver's license. Late March of 2013, this was reversed, but DACAmented youth would receive a difference license, a vertical positioned one with a bright fuchsia header and the phrases 'LIMITED TERM' and 'NO LAWFUL STATUS' in red (Figure 23; Rivas, 2013).



Figure 23: Proposed North Carolina driver's license for DACA recipients

Immigrant rights organizations such as Charlotte's Latin American Coalition protested against this decision. Immigration status notification on a driver's license is standard practice and there are different colored and imaged licenses for underage individuals as well. However, the original license for DACA recipients was more notably different than for other non-citizens, where visa expiration date is noted more subtly in small font on the back. Moreover, age is less stigmatized than legal status. Now, DACA licenses look more similar to the standard North Carolina ones, though they are still demarcated with the words 'LEGAL PRESENCE NO LAWFUL STATUS' and 'LIMITED TERM' (Figure 24; Burns, 2013).



Figure 24: Current North Carolina driver's license for DACA recipients

The negotiated version is more acceptable. Still, on the experiential side, this demarcated license sends the message that DACAmented individuals are different from other residents, thereby perpetuating some of the shame migrants may feel about their status. One participant commented that: "my license, I don't want to show it to anybody. I'm scared to show it to my friends. They say 'can I see your license' and I say 'no' because of the words on it. I don't like it" (O15, F, 21, DACA). Youth may try to avoid situations where they have to use this ID – often their only form of US identification – in order to prevent 'outing' themselves to others. Often questioned about their belonging in the US, having a differentiated license acts as a painful reminder to DACAmented individuals that they are different and 'unlawful.'

d. No benefits, no health care, and no in-state tuition.

- "...right now we have our social and we have a card saying we are here legally, we have our driver's license, but yet we're not seen as residents, we're still seen as undocumented people, which means we have no benefits at all. For applications for college, I still have to pay out of state tuition. Even



though I have my social and I can prove to them I've been living in this country for 14 years" (D30, F, 17, DACA).

- e. DACA is only for a narrow group of people and for a limited time frame.

There are still millions of undocumented migrants – often the parents of US citizens and DACAmented youth – who cannot be legalized unless the federal government provides a way to do this, for example through comprehensive immigration reform. Moreover, renewing DACA every two years brings significant financial and logistical challenges that constrain youth's ability to maintain an uninterrupted legal status and employment.

- "...if you think about it, the DACA is every two years, but you have to reapply about 3 or 4 months before that. Then, I've also realized that even just working with the school, you know, you start doing your contracts just ahead of time and they have seen that my working permit ends soon, so I can't end up working again unless I get my DACA renewed" (N14, F, 21, DACA).
- "...right now the requirement for the job permit is that you have to be in school. What happens after you graduate school, after you finish college? You never know. There's still a lot of changes going on right now so I can't really predict anything" (M13, F, 16, DACA).
- "...it sucks that they have to go through that two year thing and once you turn a certain age, you can't have it no more. It's like something is always stopping them, even though they're trying to reach their goals. There's always a 'but' to stop them. And then some other people, that just dropped out of school because they think that nothing is going to happen to them" (E5, F, 20, undoc).

- f. Lack of employer familiarity with the program and how it should be used.

Participants are grateful for DACA and the doors it has opened but they are stressed and frustrated about being in a constant state of limbo, as they describe it.

Besides DACA and permanent residency, there are other statuses that youth hold that may get overlooked in the immigration debate. Two of those represented among my participants are TPS and the U visa. Youth with less common visas seem particularly confused about what they can or cannot do:

- "...it's a really awkward spot. There's things for people with DACA, but I feel like not me in particular. I'm in a really narrow space, I don't know anybody else who's under my program [TPS] besides my brother (...) I've felt discouraged. It's just because of the system because of how oppressed you feel. When you're really trying and really want it, but it's so hard to just get a basic education due to a number, or due to the price. It's frustrating" (F6, F, 19, TPS).
- "...there was a time period when I didn't have documentation status. But, I've had it now recently in the last year or two. (...) our social security numbers are only . . . they're work social security numbers. But, in a few years, we will be able to apply for residency. (...) I think we just have to be with a certain number of years with the visa and then apply for residency. I'm not really sure how that works. [when I was in between statuses] I didn't know if I was going to get another one. I think...I knew it was an obstacle" (A27, F, 16, U visa).

There is confusion and uncertainty around DACA for recipients and employers, but as much or perhaps even more for youth with TPS and U visas. It is difficult to find clear answers via online sources and employers or universities are often unfamiliar with these

visas and what holders are eligible for. Recipients may have to hire lawyers – which can be expensive – to navigate their opportunities.

#### 4.6 Discrimination and Stereotypes

Discrimination is an action that denies the rights of a person due to their association (or perceived association) with a certain group, e.g. religion, gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity. These actions can be personal or institutional. In this case, I am referring to ethnicity-based discrimination towards Latinos/as and how that limits youth job access. Stereotypes are negative or positive associations about a certain social group. They are generalizations that shape how people interact with others from that certain social group. These behaviors may be of discriminatory nature.

For the most part, youth view being Hispanic as a barrier to employment and, after documentation status, their ethnicity – or other people's perceptions of their ethnicity – was the most discussed topic in the interviews (though this was not as apparently in the questionnaire responses; see Figure 21). The fact that Latinos face ethnicity-based stereotyping and discrimination in the US is not new; however, it is apparent from my data that this plays a significant role in shaping the process into the labor market for Hispanic 1.5-generation immigrant youth. Thus, it is meaningful to recognize these experiences and specifically the ways in which ethnicity shapes participants' work access.

My findings are similar to those of Perreira and colleagues (2008) who interviewed 283 Latino immigrant youth ages 12-19 in North Carolina middle and high schools. 80% of their sample were 1.5-generation immigrants and 95% were not US citizens. Like my study, they found that both genders experienced discrimination but

there were also students who did not feel discrimination against. In both studies, examples of prejudice are often within the school setting, since that is where adolescents spend much of their time and where social interactions play out.

- a. Access is granted in certain sectors/jobs and restricted in others.

Hispanic immigrant youth face are subject to stereotypes about which jobs are for Hispanics and which are not. Regardless of whether this is statistically measurable, my respondents' perceptions would suggest this to be the case; consequently, it impacts their job-searching experiences and ambitions. Many feel expected or limited to working the jobs of (some of) their parents or with high concentrations of Hispanic immigrants, even though their linguistic, cultural, and educational background are different from that of first-generation migrants. These feelings were consistent among participants across age, gender, SES, and documentation status. For instance:

- "[In construction,] if you're American, they don't give you the same placement if you're Hispanic. They do prefer Hispanics (...) But in other fields, no. (...) I went to a couple of farms just to look around and things, that is another, another job or field that there's a lot of Hispanics doing the work and you'll just have an American person at the head (...) Or, minorities in fast food or in restaurants I also see, from personal experience, I can go to an Italian, American, Chinese, and I'll see Hispanics. (...) If I see that a Hispanic is working there, then that makes it, 'If he got there, then I can also be in there'" (B2, M, 17, DACA).
- "I'm an immigrant, I'm not gonna be able to get a job, what am I gonna do? I can only work construction" (B28, M, 16, undoc).

- "I've seen it with people that are Hispanic that have applied to certain places and they never get a call back." Interviewer: "What kind of places?" Participant: "I guess they consider themselves more high-end and so they only want certain people to work there and make the place look nice" (E31, F, 19 DACA).
- "[My classmate] said: well, you are Hispanic, you only do certain jobs" (I9, M, 16, PR).
- "...let's say Nordstrom, I don't think I've ever seen a Hispanic working there. Ever. But if it's some cook job across the street, I don't think it really matters" (L12, M, 17, DACA).
- "...society doesn't look at the Latin American as big professionals" (P16, F, 18, DACA).
- "...most people think Hispanics are just construction workers or house moms that pop babies here and there and they don't do anything" (X24, F, 16, citizen).

b. Hispanic = Mexican

Another point participants brought up is the assumption that all Hispanics are Mexican. Though this may not be bad-intended, youth are bothered that this assumption is made without considering that they may be from a different country, regardless of whether they were in fact born in Mexico. Such seemingly minor, but often repeating, encounters, may contribute to social segregation of ethnic groups because people feel misinterpreted or misunderstood by "the other."

- "...people in America associate all Latinos with being Mexican, sometimes I feel that's a disadvantage. They have an image, a stereotypical image and they usually associate that with being Mexican" (A27, F, 16, visa).

- "...they automatically think that I am from Mexico. I'm like, 'Nah, I am from Bolivia. But I was born in Argentina'" (I35, M, 16, PR).
- "...some people think we are all from Mexico but then someone's like: no, I'm Salvadorian" (J10, F, 16, PR).
- "I go to a school where the majority of people are White so they just classify me as Mexican" (K11, F, 16, PR).
- "...hey, I'm Colombian. Oh, what part of Mexico is that?" (X24, F, 16, citizen).

It should also be acknowledged that part of how Latinos respond to this assumption can be explained by relationships among Latin Americans. Latinos – a US-socially constructed pan-ethnic category – are far from a homogenous group. Cultural, class, racial, and nationality differences and tensions in Latin America are transferred into the US context.

- "...even between Latin America, there are certain countries that are stereotypically said more empowered than others" (D4, M, 16, DACA).
- "...there's two perspectives. If you look at it as a whole, everyone's together. Because the people who want to become someone, they all work hard and they will help each other out. But if you go inside deeper, than you will see that, even though you are also Hispanic, there's also racism in a way" (D30, F, 17, DACA).
- "...it's not 'Oh well, there's a lot of Latinos in Charlotte.' Well no, there's a lot of Central American people, you know Salvadoran, Honduran, and Guatemala, they really have overpowered this area more than the Mexican" (B2, M, 17, DACA).

Some of this rivalry fades when people migrate to the US:

- "...it's different when you're living in your actual home, your original country because there's so much competitiveness and hatred with other countries. But, when you come to America, you become one" (F6, F, 19, TPS).
- "...each person from different countries is starting to accept more each other because they know they are in the same situation" (I9, M, 16, PR).
- "95% of us, think '*todos somos unidos*'; we're all Hispanic, we're all family" (X24, F, 16, citizen).

The 1.5 and second generation in particular grow up in the US where there is more of a unity among Latinos than in Latin America:

- "...my mom's personal experience, she has seen that if you are Mexican, you help other Mexican people but if you are Salvadorian you help Salvadorian people but personally I've seen though the work force, even though I was only there for a little bit, you just help out. I think it's because of the younger generation, they are more liberal, you just help out whoever" (P16, F, 18, DACA).
  - "When I went to school I interacted with Salvadorians and Puerto Ricans and every single kind of Hispanic person out there but my mom doesn't interact with them, my mom interacts with Mexican people" (U21, F, 20, DACA).
- c. Hispanics are seen as different and less competent compared to their Caucasian counterparts.

In the dominant White supremacist discourse, brown and black people are lower in the racial hierarchy than white people. Though the US has made significant progress in racial justice compared to the pre-civil rights era, instances of structural, institutional, and individual-level inequities in treatment and outcomes are still prevalent.

- "I feel like every time I click that 'Hispanic ethnicity' button, I feel like it becomes so biased (...) I lose hope because I know that it is going to take a long time to call me (...) [ethnicity] doesn't just affect the undocumented as well as the documented because also the documented people that were born here are judged just because of their ethnicity. So I mean I think ethnicity has more of a power, a negative impact" (D4, M, 16, DACA).
  - "...it doesn't bother me, the fact that I am Mexican, but what kind of bothers me is that they view me as something, someone different" (I9, M, 16, PR).
  - "...they see you less capable of doing stuff, just by the color of your skin. And I think it's been like that for a long time. And the laws have changed but people haven't" (S19, M, 18, DACA).
- d. Being Hispanic is associated with being undocumented.

Participants shared that people, including employers, make assumptions about their documentation status based on their ethnicity. Though all undocumented migrants face the challenges of not having a legal work permit, and undocumented migrants come from different parts of the globe, Hispanics are more likely to be asked if they are undocumented. In other words, there is a link made between Hispanics and being undocumented, even though that is often erroneous. Although estimates suggest that around 82% of undocumented migrants are from Latin America (King & Punti, 2012), over 83% of Hispanics in the US are documented.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup>There are roughly 54 million Latinos in the US. Fewer than 9 million (16.7%) are undocumented.



- "I was less than a year old when I came here and now I'm getting hit with these realities, like: hey, you can't do this because you're Latino and you're marginalized, as undocumented, to the general public. To the general public, we are called so many names, we are discriminated against, it is hard sometimes to walk in anywhere and they say: are you documented? There have been times where I've seen that happen" (Q17, M, 16, undoc).
- "...if I look Hispanic, they are going to be like: he's illegal, don't give him a job" (B28, M, 16, undoc).
- "...he says: but wait, do you have permission to work in the United States? And I said: yes, I have permission, I have a job permit. (...) it was a bit inappropriate because it was a stereotypical question, because I'm Hispanic" (M13, F, 16, DACA).

This findings confirms work by Landale and colleagues (2008, p. 357) that immigrants' legal status "affects not only the undocumented but also authorized Hispanic immigrants (...) who are often falsely assumed to be in the country illegally".

- e. Positive stereotypes exist – but they can back-fire.

Positive stereotypes about Latinos that may assist in their labor market inclusion include being hard-working and bilingual. Though the majority of comments from participants point towards labor market exclusion based on their ethnicity, it is sometimes viewed as an asset as well:

- "...because I am Latina and with the job I received, working at the Latino Student Services Office, so it helps me be more approachable to the newer Latino students that come on campus that see a friendly face like theirs, working at an office on campus and you don't usually see much of that around" (N14, F, 21, DACA).

- "...being Hispanic or Latino, I think that kind of gives a plus. Especially . . . I guess for our generation, since a lot of Hispanics are now in four year universities, going to professional jobs, that's very helpful" (A1, M, 21, PR).
- "Since we're in a society where there's a lot of diversity, a lot of organizations want diversity in people. For example, when I went to the open house at Appalachian State, I believe - I don't know - but I believe that it was the first time they spoke in English and in Spanish, and encouraged the Hispanics to apply there, they are more than welcome to, open doors, don't worry about anything, we'll receive you. So in a way, you have an advantage ethnicity-wise for school, scholarships and work. But then you also face the problem of, once again, racism" (D30, F, 17, DACA).
- "...the United States is so diverse...I don't think my ethnicity plays a part because there are people from everywhere and the Hispanic population in the US is already really big so people have gotten, in a way, used to our culture, so they don't really discriminate, well, most people don't discriminate" (M13, F, 16, DACA).

This asset-based approach counters the more general trend of being Hispanic as being a barrier to employment. However, benefits were mostly tied to the assumption that, if they looked Hispanic, they are probably bilingual. Also, as previously noted, the positive view of Latinos as hard-working can be an excuse – intentionally or not –to exploit them for their labor. There is also a certain amount of skepticism about “diversity” hires:

- "...a way of tokenism where they wanted to be able to promote the university as being diverse, but they only really took in a few and then they're like, “ Oh ok, now we are diverse.” Maybe jobs might be doing that as well. But I support it, I

would support it even if it started out that way, you could change into, you know, into something else. Once those people get higher positions, it might be different" (J36, M, 21, DACA).

- "Employers might seek to hire me because of . . . to fill in that law where you have to hire a specific number" (G7, F, 21, PR).
- "I did try to go see the KFC the other day and the guy was telling me he wants more Hispanic people working, but at the same time, I don't know how to take that" (O15, F, 21, DACA).
- "...in the Home Depot, before I resigned, another co-worker resigned and my boss, he was really cool. He asked me, 'hey, don't resign because I need a certain ratio of minorities and Caucasian in the company, in the store.'" (A1, M, 21, PR).

As previously touched upon, the stereotype of the "hard-working immigrant" is approached with a sense of pride as well as skepticism:

- "...people see us as hardworking people. Anywhere you go, they always want to hire Hispanics because they know they work hard and they'll do their best. I think that's a positive" (E5, F, 20, undoc).
- "Hispanic people, we work hard and yes, we do, but sometimes people, because people work hard, they take advantage of that. They give all the hard work to the Hispanic people, which is my mom's case. My mom works extremely hard. She even does the guys' job" (O15, F, 21, DACA).

In other words, the positive association with Hispanics as "hard-working" and therefore as more desirable hires, can work to their disadvantage if "hard-working" is interpreted by employers as "exploitable." In the chapter 'Racializing Hiring Practices for "Dirty

Jobs",’ Lippard (2011) reminds us that racialized stereotypes are not uncommon.

Immigrant minority job seekers may be subject to hiring discrimination in certain jobs but, in others, they are favored due to their ‘work ethic’ or ‘special talents’ (e.g. bilingualism). From 42 in-depth interviews with Black, Latino and White contractors “Latino immigrants received the highest compliments because contractors saw them as the most reliable, efficient, docile, and most importantly cheaper and more profitable in comparison to native-born Whites and Blacks” (203). Generalizations about characteristics of certain groups – in this case Latino immigrants – drove hiring practices and allowed contractors to maximize profits. We see how this plays out in the lives of my study participants and their families. While these preconceptions are mostly linked to undocumented Latino migrants with limited English ability (therefore considered less powerful and easier to exploit), it is extended to other Latinos. The “hard-working Latino/a” stereotype helps youth secure work but not necessarily the positions of working conditions they are interested in. Participants are aware that Latino immigrants are hired in many “3-D jobs” (dangerous, dirty and dead-end industries) and, even if they currently work those jobs, explain how they try to avoid them in the future. Anti-immigrant laws perpetuate this “favoring” by excluding Latino immigrants from higher education and other industries, and keeping them fearful of taking action in cases of labor violations. Growing up in “two worlds,” Latino youth are not prepared to take on the struggles their parents went through and are gaining the tools to resist (some of) these stereotypes.

Parallel to this, the stereotype of the “lazy American” made US-born Whites, Blacks and Latinos less desirable hires (Lippard, 2011). A White contractor is quoted stating that “Hispanic have been here for a while and have taken on some of America’s

worst qualities, such as taking breaks and wanting time off” (p. 225). While this may seem an unreasonable statement, driving by a capitalist mentality that does not understand fair working conditions, Latino immigrant youth themselves hold similar opinions about their US-born peers. Even though they are advocates of labor rights and are employees themselves (rather than employers), they see their US-born peers’ work mentality as lesser and criticize them for that. The negative connotation of the American work ethic runs contradictory to the “immigrant mentality” of sacrifice and hard work, but also to the “American dream” that hard work leads to a better life (and for the US to maintain global economic control). Viewed from a different perspective, the “hard-working immigrant” epitomizes the face-less, powerless bodies, slave-like drivers of the neoliberal economy. In this light, the “lazy American” is perhaps entitled but also empowered and aware of his/her rights and choices.

In addition to “looking Hispanic,” having an accent or a “Hispanic-sounding” name also triggers ethnic stereotyping, according to my results. For example: “I’ve been here fourteen years and I see that other people they come and they have a really bad accent and they just don’t want them because of the accent” (B2, M, 17, DACA). Many 1.5-generation youth have an “Americanized” accent and do not face the same accent-related discrimination as first-generation migrants, even though they shared that people still make assumptions about their English abilities (that they cannot speak English).

- “I was working with my dad and a white person thought we didn't know English and he just started cussing us out and I got mad because he thought I didn't know English and he was cussing out badly. They hate us like that because they might think we don't know English, but we do” (Y25, M, 17, DACA).

- "I saw mean looks from the mom and the stepmom [where I used to tutor]. They saw me and they look me up and down. I was like: that was really rude. But I can't say anything because I'm trying to get the job. The stepmom thought I didn't know English and I was pretty confused because they were talking to me in English but she was being really rude, she was being loud, she was trying to pronounce words in Spanish" (X24, F, 16, citizen).

Many participants were aware of the impact of a "Hispanic-sounding" name on their employment chances. For instance: "because of my name, it's pretty Hispanic, they would think that I need the job and since it's the dish room I would take it because...other ethnicities, I don't think they would take it. (...) they think Hispanics are poor, we are willing to take any job to meet our help with the bills and everything, so if it's a janitor or construction or cleaning something up that they would look more to Hispanic names" (H34, M, 19, DACA). The opposite is also true: "whenever I apply and when people hear my name, it doesn't sound Mexican. So when they see me, they're like: oh, you're Hispanic, I thought you were something else" (U21, F, 20, DACA). Moreover, four participants cited a recent article that went viral about a man who changed his name on his resume from 'Jose' to 'Joe'<sup>25</sup> and suddenly received calls but "[w]hen he was 'Jose' there weren't any calls" (P16, F, 18, DACA). Name-based stereotyping with "Black-sounding" names has been well-documented in the literature (e.g. Bertrand and Mullainathan, 2004; Pager and Shepherd, 2008; Pager et al., 2009) and this racial (implicit) bias extends beyond the labor market (Mullainathan, 2015). In Pager and Shepherd (2008) review of major findings from studies of racial discrimination in

---

<sup>25</sup> See, e.g., [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/09/02/jose-joe-job-discrimination\\_n\\_5753880.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/09/02/jose-joe-job-discrimination_n_5753880.html)

employment, housing, credit, and consumer markets, they conclude that, though racial discrimination is “not the only nor even the most important factor shaping contemporary opportunities,” it does contribute “to the poor social and economic outcomes of minority groups” (p. 6, 20). Indeed, being Hispanic plays a role in labor market experiences and everyday life, but not possessing a social security number does more for excluded people from employment, housing, and credit. Further chapters will discuss how youth navigate these situations and potential buffering factors.

Likewise, Zaami (2012) discusses how Ghanaian ethnic names act as barrier to immigrant youth employment opportunities in Toronto. In my study, youth also mentioned this impacts their experiences of labor market exclusion<sup>26</sup> and employers may make assumptions about their documentation status, their level of English, their culture and behavior, and their work ethic. This seems particularly frustrating for youth who have been living in the US for the majority of their lives, often identified just as strongly, if not stronger, with their ‘American’ identity as their parent’s nationality, because there is a disconnect between how they view themselves and how “society” views them.

Preconceptions revealed in this study are typically related to ethnicity but may also be linked to the person’s country of origin:

- "...there's some people that don't really like people from Mexico to work. They just don't like them, they don't like them around" (B2, M, 17, DACA).

---

<sup>26</sup> Consequently, when brainstorming ideas for the PAR project, one group suggested sending out resumes with Hispanic and Caucasian-sounding names to test differences in response rates. We chose a different project but evidently this is on participants’ minds.

- "...they always refer back to Pablo Escobar. Or cocaine or something with drug dealing. You know, the bad sticks, the bad is always remembered" (C29, F, 17, PR).
- "...when I get into policy, that might always be brought up of, 'you were Communist indoctrinated and Socialist thoughts and views.' So, that's always going to be something that comes up" (G7, F, 21, PR).

The consequences of this – at times subtle, at times blatant – prejudice is multifold. As published in the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) report (Brown 2015), the psychological, physical, educational, and social impacts of discrimination on immigrant children and adolescents include “lower self-esteem and life satisfaction” (p. 8), “racial mistrust, problem behaviors, and greater anxiety, aggression, hopelessness, and depressive symptoms” (p. 1). Similarly to my study, the report focuses on discrimination as noticed and perceived by individuals themselves, and emphasizes the importance of acknowledging how the child experiences discrimination. My participants commented on how discrimination of others in their family and community affects them as well.

Flores, et al. (2010) likewise found that Mexican American adolescents exhibit post-traumatic stress symptoms and health risk behaviors as a result of perceived racial/ethnic discrimination. In extension, throughout all my interactions with Latinos in the US, despite dissimilarities in country of origin, SES, educational attainment, gender, and other identities, I recognize a common experience of facing stereotyping and discrimination, and this often manifests itself in schools and the workplace, and increasingly also via social media (e.g.: “[the influence of] Media. Social media. The memes of Hispanics. Those are funny for other people, but I get offended sometimes”



(X24, F, 16, citizen)). “Counteracting the effects of discrimination is challenging, especially given that the impact of discrimination on immigrant children is often compounded by other, contextual factors” such as poverty and attending low-resource, segregated schools, Brown (2015, p. 1) notes. At ages 16-21, my participants are able to identify instances of direct discrimination (such as being called “illegal”), more subtle micro-aggressions (e.g. “but where are you *really* from?”), and some articulated more structural biases (“[laws like 287(g)] it’s a form of expression of hate toward a certain marginalized community. And the thing is, it’s so covered up” (Q17, M, 16, undoc)). Others, on the other hand, did not mention and may be still unaware of larger, structural social inequities. Effects of discrimination that emerged in my study, as related to labor market access, include:

- a. The underrepresentation of Hispanics in professional roles.

The lack of role models for young Hispanics to aspire to perpetuates the stereotype that they can only work in certain jobs.

- "...most of the people I talk to who are Latinos, they have jobs coaching soccer teams and food places, mostly restaurants like Mi Pueblo and Azteca, they work there and car shops, auto shops. Like [name], he works at a mechanic. Mainly small jobs. (...) different views of the Hispanics would give you more of an outlook of everybody, like not all of them are construction workers and not all of them are maseras, waitresses. Having them in different environments and seeing that and experiencing that, I think that would help with the stereotypes" (X24, F, 16, citizen).

- “I would say ethnicity [stands in my way from being a pediatric nurse]. By ethnicity I mean where I’m from and skin color and then based on...hopefully not once I graduate but my status in the United States. Those are the two things that I think would become a barrier to becoming what I want to become” (D30, F, 17, DACA).

This finding is backed up by a 2003 study using PUMS data. The authors found that Hispanic are underrepresented in managerial and professional occupations. Whereas Hispanics have a 6% chance working as a manager or other form of professional employment, non-Hispanic Whites had 32% chance, as a result of human capital, economic, and spatial barriers (Mundra et al, 2003).

b. Diminished self-esteem and confidence about their future

Being perceived as less competent or less likely to succeed can become internalized:

- "...there is sometimes a low expectation for Latinos than other minorities of what they can accomplish. I even think sometimes we end up putting that same expectation for ourselves because we think that it is expected for us to fail and we end up believing it sometimes ourselves" (N14, F, 21, DACA).

In a study with 400 immigrant children and teens (the average age was 12) in Boston and Northern California, 65% of the respondents filled out a negative term for the question “Most Americans think that most [people from the respondents’ birthplace] are \_\_\_\_\_.” (Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco, 2015). Young people are aware of the negative assumptions of their race, intelligence and status, causing stress, doubt, and anxiety. Repeatedly hearing denigrating comments undermines and diminishes immigrants’

optimism and aspirations. “We can’t do the same things as them in school or at work,” a 10-year-old girl answered. “the blatant, uncensored xenophobic sentiments freely bandied along the campaign trail and in social media” have worsened, Suárez-Orozco and Suárez-Orozco (2015). “Growing up in an exclusionary climate threatens well-being, positive identity formation and social belonging.”

c. Wanting to ‘prove society wrong’

I was impressed with the grace and patience participants expressed in the face of discrimination. In many cases, they felt hurt but not angry per se and believed that the ignorance driving this discrimination can be overcome by informed others and demonstrating the capabilities of Latino immigrants. Youth ability to translate a negative experience into a positive action is remarkable and courageous. It also demonstrates agency and resilience in the face of challenges.

- "...if you have a good job, and you're Latino and people come in like, "Oh look he's Latino." He's not just anybody else that works here. It's actually, "He's Spanish, he's Hispanic..." It's not common to see with a good job and be Latino. I feel like that could be good. It could be a good positive things for other people. It makes them want to be better" (I35, M, 16, PR).
- "...companies try to be as politically correct as possible. And so they - sometimes it is 100% legit, sometimes they are trying to just appear inclusive and if you were to point out at a company: 'hey, you have no Latinos', then they start scrabbling 'we need to get Latinos in here' (...) if I get hired with my ethnicity being a contributing factor, I can definitely help change the viewpoints of people because

people have preconceived conceptions about your ethnicity and it is being an ambassador of your ethnicity, you can start changing people's minds" (F32, M, 21, DACA).

- "It's not what we can say, it's more what we can show that would change the mind of people" (D4, M, 16, DACA).
- "I want to prove that not only Americans can be successful in this country but also other people from different countries" (T20, F, 18, DACA).

#### 4.7 Family

Journals and mental maps provided insights into youth daily lives. Besides school and work, household and family tasks take up a notable portion of participants' time. These responsibilities often go beyond what non-immigrant, non-Hispanic youth face and, if youth are working with their parents or as part of a family business, the lines between paid work and family responsibilities may be blurred. This is not a bad trend but it does add extra expectations, which may lead to increase stress and less time for paid work, internships, or other capital-building activities.

- Picking up sibling from school, helping out in the house. "that's why a lot of people drop out, to help their family" (T20, F, 18, DACA).
- "...really what she wanted me to do was stay home and help, or get a job full-time. I think that's still the conflict now, where she still doesn't understand what going to school will do for me" (E31, F, 19, DACA).
- "A Latino student is more responsible in the household or has a lot more responsibilities than a student who's natively American because my job was to translate for my parents at medical offices, at the bank. So I was aware of a lot of

issues that my parents had that other kids did not have. I had to mature a lot faster" (G7, F, 21, PR).

- "...going back to the Hispanic culture where you kind of have to help out in your family. It would have turned into something that's really not a choice anymore. You have to do it. If you don't get away from it, then you're going to be stuck there" (J36, M, 21, DACA).

For many, this is part of life and not considered as burdensome; in fact, the contrary may be true. As one participant expressed: "Although the things I do for my family take majority of my time, I have learned a lot for the future" (R18, F, 21, DACA). Indeed, family responsibilities can prepare youth with 'real-life' skills they will apply in their social, professional, and familial lives.

Figure 25 and 26 are examples of mental maps drawn by participants, reflecting their daily trajectories. In this case, both youth are in school and make regular trips to drop off or pick up younger siblings at other schools in the city. In their corresponding journal entries, they described how this takes additional time but that they see value in such tasks. E.g.:

- "Since I quit my job my dad has given me multiple things to do, I have kind of become a personal assistant. I don't mind it, I feel very useful like I am helping my family and pulling my own weight. (..) I start at 6.30am, taking my brother to school. After, I stop by the gas station get my mom coffee (..) I don't want to be a bigger financial burden...I want to be a physician which hopefully someday I will be able to repay my parents' generosity" (R18, F, 21, DACA).

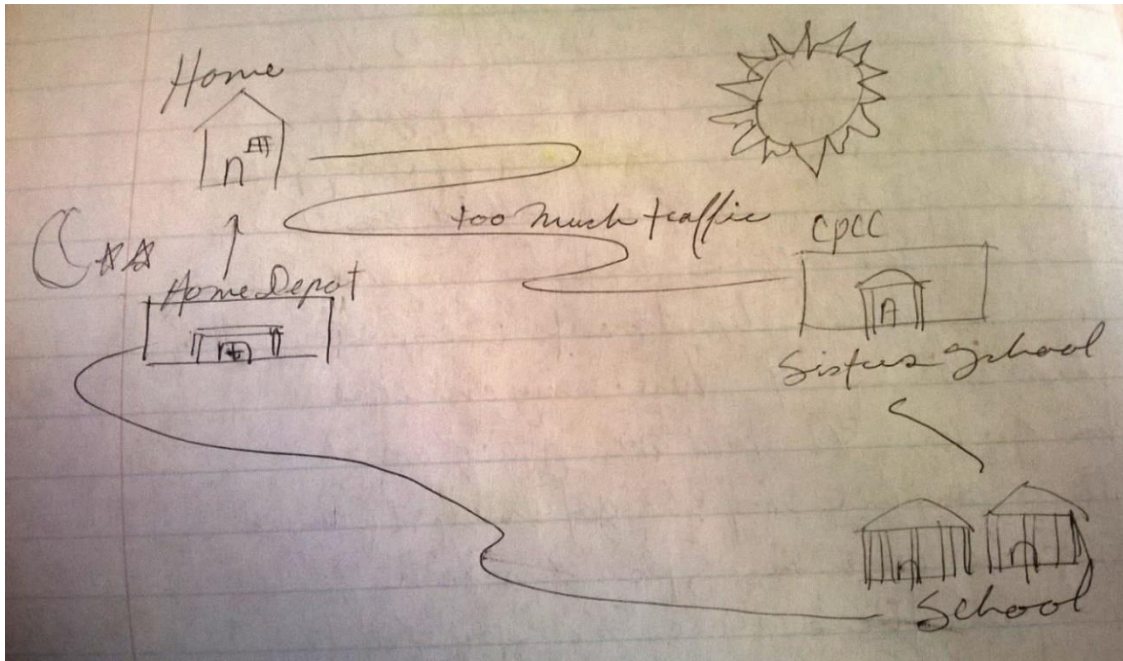


Figure 25: Mental map, example 1

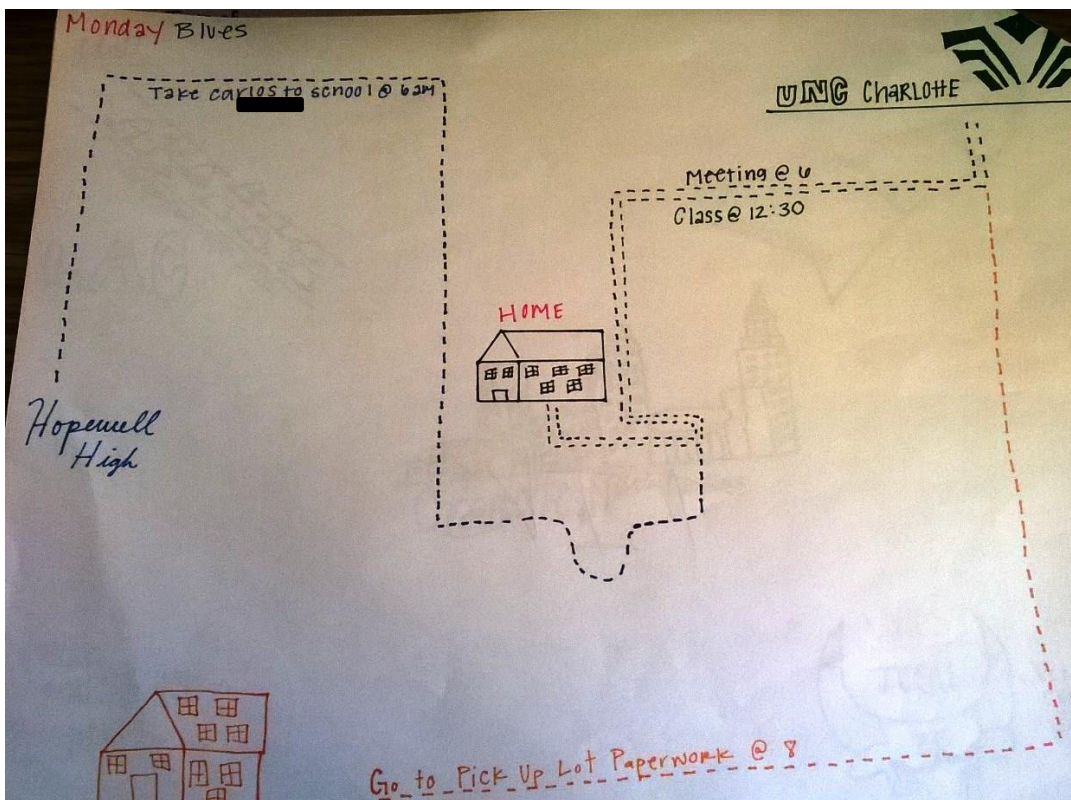


Figure 26: Mental map, example 2

#### 4.7.1 Lack of Resources, Support, and Information

A common theme was that, as the first generation growing up in the US, their parents are typically unable to provide insight into the US educational system and professional labor market. Though most participants received strong support from at least one adult in their life, they still lack access to information and resources to navigate higher education and the professional labor market. Youth may be highly motivated to reach a certain profession, but how to get there ('connecting the dots') is difficult. The lack of information excludes immigrant youth from opportunities that their peers may have.

- "I think the main thing is the legal status. Other than that, I think information. A lot of times, our parents have not experienced what we're going through or they're not aware of the opportunities that there are" (A1, M, 21, PR).
- "I just wish I had a bit more support, especially with my parents asking me so many questions, because they didn't go to school here so they don't know how the school system works. So, they are always asking me questions and there's some times where I'm stumped and I'm like: okay, I don't know, don't ask me. But they're like: how do you not know? You go to school here, you know how you talk to people, why don't you get around and do things? (...) I always had to figure it out as I went, because - like I said - my parents weren't raised here, they don't know how the system works, so I'm the first one in and everybody's there and I'm like: which way do I go? I never really had that guidance" (C29, F, 17, PR).
- "...my parents don't really have much knowledge of what it is to be in college here in the U.S. They're there, but they can't provide any support. (...) all they

can give me is emotional support, I suppose (...) There's no clubs that were geared toward Hispanic students in my high school, there were no events and programs geared towards us" (G7, F, 21, PR).

- "...my mother (...) she doesn't have the experience in applying it in a job. She's had a job before, part-time, but she didn't have to go through the process of applying online, writing a resume. And my father, he doesn't...he doesn't have the time" (M13, F, 16, DACA).

Accordingly, youth may feel frustrated because they have big dreams and they are expected to be upwardly mobile, but they may lack the resources, support, and information to guide them. School guidance counselors and other school staff have been helpful for some participants, but oftentimes school staff do not have time to help every student or they are unprepared to offer assistance for undocumented and DACAmented students:

- "I didn't feel like I had much help when I asked my counselor for help.(...) my counselor was like: you'll be able to get these scholarships with your GPA and stuff but they were scholarships that were for citizens and so once I told her that she said: just keep doing what you're doing. But she didn't really know how to help me" (E31, F, 19, DACA).
- "...in school I wasn't getting the support from my teachers. It was really stressful (...) One of my mentors has told me, why are you wasting your parents' money, you know? It just feels very hard for me . . . because I don't want to quit school, because of all the bills." [crying] (O15, F, 21, DACA).



While some school staff may simply not care, larger systems are more often to blame.

With budget cuts, counselors and social workers are often first to go. In some cases, one counselor is expected to serve hundreds of students. Staff may also lack the training to deal with immigrant students, particularly in newer immigrant gateway cities or when dealing with newer statuses (e.g. DACA) or less common ones (e.g. TPS and the U visa). These comments are particularly pertinent to public schools in lower-income and high-minority schools, arguably reflecting the value society and our politicians place on these students and their families.

This is in line with what McDevitt and Butler (2011) describe. Latino adolescents often act as ‘information leaders’ in their families and help their parents and other first-generation migrants cope in a new culture. Information including navigating the health care system, applying for college, and preparing for a job interview is not passed on from parents to their children but rather the other way round. In order to obtain this information, youth must be pro-active and seek out resources (in or outside school), which can put extra burden on them.

- "A lot of youth they tend to ask their friends for help because sometimes our family members, our parents don't really know these things so then we go to our friends but our friends may not tell you the connect things so then you're kinda stuck. What do I do? Or there is the internet but it doesn't give you the experience. Being able to talk to a person and ask some questions, that's helpful because you'll get to really learn it" (E31, F, 19, DACA).

High-achieving students are often noticed in school and mentored, but students who do not stand out as much are unlikely to receive the same guidance. Having an adult look out

for a youth's future and wellbeing can make the difference between a student dropping out of high school and then going to college and on to a professional career. As one participant describes: "From what I've seen is that some people have taken a bad route because there wasn't anybody to help them" (P16, F, 18, DACA).

#### 4.7.2 Restricted Job Networks

This topic ties into the previous one. Since many first-generation immigrant Hispanic parents work in construction, maintenance, cleaning and restaurants (in my sample and in general), youth professional networks are likely to also be concentrated in these sectors. That means it is typically easy for them to get a job in these industries,<sup>27</sup> but – after seeing their parents' struggles – that is not what they want for themselves (Kasinitz et al, 2004). Respondents' perspectives on work are strongly shaped by what they see their parents experience. As such, they may wish to steer away from fields their parents work in, or working condition and schedules that their parents endure.

- "I used to work at [name] Mexican Grill and it was nice and all, but it's not a job that I would want to keep doing" (J10, F, 16, PR).
- "I really didn't like working construction. I don't want to bust my...bust my back and be sore every day, just to come home late. No, I want to do something else, you know, make a difference" (B28, M, 16, undoc).
- "It's good [working at the laundry mat] but I wouldn't want for my mom or me to keep doing it. I want something better but if it's for right now to get a meal on the table, for me that's fine" (T20, F, 18, DACA).

---

<sup>27</sup>And most do, as indicated in the PUMS data of all 16-21 year-old foreign-born Latinos in the metropolitan area, as well as the list of study participants' previous and current jobs.

- "I don't want to end up in a dead cycle like other Hispanics do" (D4, M, 16, DACA).

Their views on work are also shaped by US definitions of a 'good job.' Work that is (viewed as) requiring less skills is paid a low wage. In US culture,<sup>28</sup> what a person does for a living is often one of the first questions one is asked when meeting someone for the first time, and there is the tendency to equate people's identities and value to their salary. As a result, people living in poverty may be shamed – or ashamed – for their work and low-wage labor and laborers becomes stigmatized. Fear for this stigmatization as well as ambition for a meaningful career may therefore both shape youth's perspectives of their own dream jobs.

- "I just didn't want to get into anything like fast food or restaurants or any of that" (B2, M, 17, DACA).
- "I would love it to be inside or an office helping, like a hospital or something that has to do with my career that I want to do in the future" (Z26, F, 16, DACA).

Participants knew a lot about the importance of connections in securing a job. Some have experienced this first-hand, whereas others have been told this.

- "If you want a certain job or want to get somewhere in life, it's not what you know, it's who you know. And that's very true because if you know someone, they'll connect you to another someone and they'll recommend you and boom, you got the job" (C29, F, 17, PR).
- "Networking is super important. That's how you get far in life" (F6, F, 19, TPS).

---

<sup>28</sup> This trait is not unique to the United States, but it is particularly strong here.

- "...good connections will take you to good places. (...) it's not what you know, it's who you know" (D30, F, 17, DACA).
- "I guess I could develop it [my network] more, cos it would give me a larger scale of job opportunities" (H8, F, 16, DACA).

In short, family plays a central role in participants' lives and in the early stages of their job search. However, the limitations of family-based networks mean 1.5-generation youth may have difficulties gaining access to professional networks.

- "Coming from a Hispanic family, we have connections within our family. (...) but to say, job wise, education wise, opportunity wise, that's a whole different story. There's very few of us that have those resources or connections to someone who can help get us there" (Q17, M, 16, undoc).
- "I wouldn't think that home-wise, family-wise, I have connections" (X24, F, 16, citizen).

A subsequent chapter on socio-spatial strategies further discusses how youth use family-based networks and how they try to branch out from these networks.

#### 4.8 Higher Education

In today's competitive, post-crisis economy, a post-secondary degree opens doors to professional jobs. The high and rising costs act as a major form of exclusion into higher education and, in turn, professional careers, and upward mobility. For most jobs to which participants aspire, they need a university degree, and they are acutely aware of this.

- "...to achieve this I have to get a higher education and practice both languages (...) higher education, it's really necessary to get a good job in America" (A27, F, 16, visa).
- "Even if it's a fast food place, they still want to see that you graduated from high school (...) with other jobs, most of them require a Bachelor's degree, unless you are doing something technical, then an associate's degree is okay but even now, in general as the US progresses, a lot of people want you to have a Bachelor's degree (...) That makes it hard for the people because not everyone can afford going to school. So it's this cycle" (E31, F, 19, DACA).
- "...especially minority students, that's the goal, a college education. Then you're set, you know what's going to happen, you will be prepared and you won't have to work as hard as your parents have. Or the amount of jobs your parents have worked. (...) higher education as a necessity for a better life" (F6, F, 19, TPS).

When asked 'What do you think will be the highest degree you will obtain?' on the questionnaire, 20 participants answered 'graduate degree', 14 said 'college degree' and 2 responded 'high school degree'. Several mentioned that there is a discrepancy between what degrees they wish to obtain and what they think they could obtain based on the resources available to them. This is a nation-wide problem that impacts most young people and their families. As New York Democratic congresswoman Rep. Maloney (2015) recently stated: "we face a student loan crisis in America. Student loan debt has doubled over the past seven years and is now close to \$1.3 trillion. About 40 million Americans have an average debt exceeding \$27,000, and some end up paying back loans well into their 30s, 40s and even 50s." Clearly, the high cost of post-secondary education

is an unsustainable practice, for individuals as well as the country.

Those in lower-income households and those who are undocumented are particularly disadvantaged when it comes to paying for college. Permanent residents and US citizens are eligible for federal financial aid and can apply for loans, but undocumented persons cannot and most non-resident visas are also ineligible.<sup>29</sup> Undocumented and DACAmented youth pay out-of-state tuition in North Carolina, regardless of how long they have lived in the state. North Carolina TPS and U visa recipients may be eligible for in-state tuition (this may also vary by state), provided they meet the other criteria, but not for federal financial aid.

- "I think with the visas we have, that I don't qualify for in-state tuition" (A27, F, 16, U visa).<sup>30</sup>
- "I would love to go to graduate school, but I don't know if I would get a chance to because college is expensive, especially when I have to pay out of state" (P16, F, 18, DACA).
- "I've felt discouraged. It's just because of the system because of how oppressed you feel. When you're really trying and really want it, but it's so hard to just get a basic education due to a number, or due to the price. It's frustrating" (F6, F, 19, TPS).

Consequently, most struggle to pay for college and are reliant on personal or family earnings and (private) scholarships.

---

<sup>29</sup> T-visa holders (victims of human trafficking) and refugees are among non-citizens that can apply for federal financial aid (Federal Student Aid website).

<sup>30</sup> I tried to verify this but it was hard for me to find a clear answer. It appears that U visa and TPS recipients may be eligible for in-state tuition in public institutions, but the participant thought she did not qualify. Evidently, the policies are unclear and the youth themselves and their families are not sure what they are or are not eligible for.

- "...it kinda bothers me sometimes that...my dad, just recently now, got unemployment and I think because he just got unemployment it hit me. And then my mom, she's a custodian, so she doesn't get paid that much. So it has recently hit me: how am I doing to do this? What am I going to do differently to not end up with such debt?" (I9, M, 16, PR).
- "I got into school, but I'm not sure about the school. It's giving me a scholarship. I've applied to many schools, but the money is not enough. I don't know . . . even with what I work, I got to get another job. It's not enough to pay for school unfortunately. So I'm very undecided." (O15, F, 21, DACA).
- "That's why I want to go into the army, because they say they pay for college" (Z26, F, 16, DACA).

Others feel the pressure to work to help support their family and drop out of high school or do not apply for college: 'Some of them, it's the money that doesn't let them go to college so that's why they want to drop out and work instead' (Z26, F, 16, DACA).

In sum, results show that labor market exclusion is mainly based on documentation status, ethnicity-based discrimination and stereotyping, the lack of information, restricted networks, and (indirectly) the cost of higher education. Even with DACA (and thus a valid social security number), several participants describe they encountered employers that were against hiring people with DACA. In addition, youth with DACA are unable to accept work contracts that extend their visa period (up to two years), they cannot obtain many professional licenses, and they face great uncertainty about whether DACA will continue. As anticipated, legal status and having a (permanent) social security number plays a central role in accessing work. Nevertheless, there are

nuances and variations to this story that are explored in this dissertation. Across youth with varying immigration statuses, a dominant narrative emerged, one that was characterized by a shared experience of being an immigrant, living with immigrant parents, and being Hispanic. The lack of resources and support became a main driver for the PAR project.

Participants perceived country of origin, SES, gender and neighborhood of residence as the factors least impacting their job opportunities. As formerly noted, there may be stereotypes associated with individuals' country of origin, and certain family networks may be organized by nationality, but overall this does not appear to have as much influence on work access as other variables.

#### 4.9 Personal Characteristics

I asked participants how they perceive their household income or socioeconomic status (SES), gender, and age influence their labor market access and experiences. They had mixed responses, as depicted in this section.

##### 4.9.1 Household Income/SES

There were expected as well as surprising results when I spoke with youth about the influence of their SES on their job opportunities. In the questionnaire responses (Figure 21), SES received the highest number of 'neutral' rankings, meaning participants answered that SES has no influence on job opportunities. In the interviews, the majority (19 out of 36) also made statements about how their SES does not limit them in their career pursuits. For instance:



- "I've been very fortunate to be part of the things I am, but I think that if I had less or if my family had more or less money, I would've still done the same thing" (A1, M, 21, PR).
- "I feel even though I live in a lower middle class family, I've been given a lot of opportunities. Because even though we're still under the poverty level because of how much money my mom makes. I don't think so, because I feel as long as you have a goal in mind you can get ahead very quickly" (F6, F, 19, TPS).
- "I'm lower-middle class. I've never felt like I was poor, even if I was. Me and my family have been on food stamps and all kinds of assistance programs, but we've never suffered that to the point of feeling like we're poor like the issues of living in a bad neighborhood, things like that have never affected me" (G7, F, 21, PR).
- "There's a lot of opportunities for people that are middle class and lower class. They can't rise to the top-top but there's a path they can work up. Hard work gets you success" (P16, F, 18, DACA).

There are several potential explanations for this. First, employers may not directly ask about your SES, but there are broader implications of a lower SES, including the impact on being able to afford professional attire, associating with certain social and professional networks, and understanding certain class-based cues and behaviors. Second, as demonstrated in the questionnaire responses, 17 participants categorized themselves as 'middle class' or average household income (other responses were: 4 low-income, 14 lower-middle income, 1 upper-middle income, 0 upper class or high income). If you are – or perceive yourself to be in – a middle class household (the majority of Americans identify with this, even though they have a broad range of incomes), you are less likely to

see class as affecting your opportunities in life. Third, the idea of the ‘American Dream’ still holds strong, not only in US society in general, but specifically in immigrant families. After all, their vision of the ‘American Dream,’ of a better life in the US, is usually what sparked their migration in the first place. A central part of this American Dream is equal opportunity and the ability to work your way up, even if you did not have much to begin with. As such, this message youth receive from society and at home, is part of their belief system.

Despite the hesitancy to assert that SES influences employment access, almost half of the participants suggested, at some point in their interview, that having a lower SES shapes life opportunities:

- "In high school, I saw that happening around certain groups of students who were in lower income levels. It wasn't always drugs or crime, it was also emotional issues caused by that. Being in a lower socioeconomic status makes you more stressed, the stress from the parents is passed to the child" (G7, F, 21, PR).
- "It's pretty hard to get around to places if you don't have the resources and even harder to make it on time without them" (J10, F, 16, PR).
- "...let's say you're poor and you try to get a good job and they look at the way you dress and they're like: man, I don't want this guy to work here because he doesn't look prepared" (B28, M, 16, undoc).
- "...two different perspectives: if you think of it as going to look for the job then why should you worry about your income? But if you look at it as trying to mix with that crowd of people, you're not going to. Because even though I'm not working, I've seen that many Hispanics try to be in the group with Whites so buy

the clothes they buy, act a certain way, to be in that group, in that social class. Because if you are from a lower social class, you behave differently than if you are in a higher social class. So we can see that now, especially at my school. We can see who's up in the pyramid of social status and who's not" (D30, F, 17, DACA).

Thus, even though there may not be the direct articulation that income impacts job access, there is an awareness about how income shapes everyday life, mobility, and resources. Youth also expressed, in the interviews and journals, the need to work to contribute to the household. Contributing to the household financially or through other responsibilities, such as housework and picking up/dropping off or looking after younger siblings, plays a central role in their daily life, as previously mentioned. This intersects with a family's household income.

- "...my dad had changed jobs and we had to call on a loan and had to pay three thousand dollars and give the car back (...) when that happened I really needed to get a job and be able to support myself and pay my gas and my bills" (I35, M, 16, PR).
- "I skipped school to work and the "money I would earn, I would put it in the savings account [of my parents]" (T20, F, 18, DACA).
- "I wanted to get a job so I could know what it's like, life. (...) Helping out, paying your bills, phone. If you want something, you gotta work for it" (Y25, M, 17, DACA).

Though cultural expectations may play a role in this, these are also common experiences for youth in working class families in general.

The strongest influence of SES on job access (though this was not always pinpointed directly) is how unaffordable higher education has become, even to middle class families.

- "...you need money to make money. You need money to go to a good college, so if your family has a lot of money and can afford a really good college, a good education, better job" (L12, M, 17, DACA).
- "...in order to get a good job, you have to get an education, and if your income is not good, if you don't have any resources, you can't really do anything" (O15, F, 21, DACA).
- "If I could obtain a PhD, I would, but the barriers are time and money, especially money" (D30, F, 17, DACA).
- "I've tried to take out a loan before. It didn't work" (R18, F, 21, DACA).

This explains why participants remarked that there is a discrepancy between the degree they wish to obtain and what they think they will obtain based on the resources available to them.

Though there was no apparent correlation in my data, others have suggested that socio-spatial strategies in job searching vary by socioeconomic status. For example, Besen-Cassino (2014, p.29) encountered that "youth from the most affluent backgrounds are the most likely to shop for jobs, whereas less economically advantaged youth resort to other means of finding work that may not be so dependent on the perceived brand of the workplace." More affluent youth wish to work at the establishments they shop (i.e. where they consume) to become associated with those brands. Furthermore, since the suburbs offer little public transit and public spaces for youth to be mobile and meet up without

parental supervision (Gaines, 1998), the workspace can act as a social space as well as a status and consumption place.

In short, the influence of SES on job opportunities is considered overall less strong than the previously-mentioned factors, such as stereotypes based on ethnicity, which affects Hispanics of all classes and immigration statuses. At the same time, SES is interlinked with documentation status (undocumented parents typically earn less than their documented counterparts) and access to higher education, which have significant influence on access to the professional jobs participants aspire to attain.

#### 4.9.2 Gender

Overall, gender was not viewed as a main attributor to labor market exclusion or inclusion, at least not to the same extent as the above-mentioned variables. A surprising number of participants (14 out of 36, both male and female) believe gender is no longer an important factor in the labor market:

- "I think that it doesn't really matter anymore. Or, it's mattering less and less every time. I think if somebody, a female comes in with better skills than I do, I think she would have a better chance of getting a job" (A1, M, 21, PR).
- "women are starting to take over male jobs and it's something that's coming up in this generation, you see women striving to do better than men and it's not really seen as such a bad thing anymore, where women can only get so far and men are always going to be superior, you don't see that as much anymore" (C29, F, 17, PR).

- "We've past that time that women are not as smart as men because there are women who are CEOs at very important companies and they are brilliant and successful at what they do" (D30, F, 17, DACA).
- "...this younger generation is just a lot more open-minded to what is possible and what people are capable of doing. The older generation is just their mind set of thinking is that women are incapable of anything" (G33, M, 16, DACA).
- "...our generation has stepped up. Now we can be equally treated" (T20, F, 18, DACA).

This may speak to youth's lack of experience seeing gender inequity play out in the workforce, which is confirmed by a comprehensive study by Besen-Cassino (2015, p.21) on youth labor markets in the US: "Young people of both sexes work while still in school in seemingly comparable jobs. These equal labor-force participation rates, perhaps, project the image of a "gender utopia," in contrast with the gendered workplaces of adult labor."

- "I took psychology and we would be talking about how different genders are perceived and I would just hear it. I've never really experienced it though but I've heard it before, I've not seen it yet" (M13, F, 16, DACA).
- "...women in general, they feel limited because even women who are in the business, in the more professional setting, it's harder for them to move up. It's easier for a guy to get a promotion than a girl. (...) from me working and seeing the different places, it still does play a big role. So it might just be that they [other youth] haven't been exposed to it" (E31, F, 19, DACA).

Similar to believing that we live in the 'post-racial era,' not recognizing the influence of gender (and thinking we live in a 'post-gender era') may constrain our abilities to overcome gender-based inequities in the work force.

On the other hand, a more optimistic view on gender equality reflects the current state of gender and society compared to the past generations, as well as to Millennials' perceptions on gender. Indeed, "Millennial women have more labor market equality than previous generations" (White House Council of Economic Advisors, 2014: 31).

- "...we can't deny the fact that women are underrepresented in different work places. We can't deny that fact. But, at the same time, because companies are trying to be more inclusive, more progressive, they try to find ways, try to focus on hiring more women in the coming years" (F32, M, 21, DACA).
- "...most people look for a strong woman....before it was always the male as a figure head but now in most, in many of the cases it's actually a woman" (C3, F, 17, DACA).

We can therefore also be hopeful if young people in today's society are adapting more equitable gender perspectives.

Though results suggest gender plays more of a contextual rather than a central role in Hispanic youth labor market access, socio-spatial inclusion and exclusion is a gendered experience, particularly as it intersects with culture and race/ethnicity. Gender-based expectations and stereotypes are linked to cultural perceptions of gender roles. A key point to explore here is the intersectionality between gender, (Latin American and American) cultural norms, and work:

- "[Girls] really don't work, they just stay home, lay back and watch TV or something. While the man's working. (...) if a girl wants to work it's okay, but no hard job. Maybe sit in an office or something. But in my opinion, I would tell her: don't work, stay home" (B28, M, 16, undoc).
- "I think it's because of our culture; women are supposed to stay home and help out at home" (E31, F, 19, DACA).
- "I'm trying to find a way to say it without sounding sexist. In some jobs, you need a man. You need a male when you lift things...somebody stronger" (L12, M, 17, DACA).
- "One of the biggest things is women's oppression. Again, it's one of those things in America that's so embedded into our culture" (Q17, M, 16, undoc).

Gender roles in the home and in the workforce remain influential. The concept of 'racializing gendering' refers to the way in which ideas of the characteristics of men and women from different ethnic groups play out in the labor market (Brah 1994). While some youth participants challenged these gendered and racialized differences in labor market behavior and expectations, others may reproduce these ideas passed on by family members, media, or other societal influences. Youth ideas of their own racialized and gendered identities affect their labor market behavior in that they may steer away from or towards certain jobs based on (internalized) stereotypes. In other cases, they will intentionally set out to prove these racialized and gendered stereotypes wrong. Racialized and gendered ideas held by employers about young people may also influence their employability, though further research with employers and hiring managers would be required in order to confirm and elaborate on that.



The influence of gender as it intersects with ethnicity is industry-dependent.

Latinos are more likely to be hired in jobs/industries with Latinos/men and Latinas are more likely to be hired in jobs/industries with Latinas/women. This has been discussed for first-generation Latinos but the assumption is that the 1.5 and second generation are not bound to these gender and ethnicity concentrated sectors to the same extent. Still, given that family members often facilitate in securing a youth's first (part-time) job(s), youth are subject to gender-based stereotypes.

- "...my uncle is a mechanic so I help him around the shop too but they were like: no, that's not a place for you because you're a girl" (T20, F, 18, DACA).
- "I feel like there they are more sexist towards men because we only have cashiers who are girls and no guys so I feel like it's the opposite there" (E31, F, 19, DACA).
- "...a hard job is not for them. It's too much for them. Their stuff is something else, like being in an office, helping out in other stuff, like being a secretary. That's my thing for girls. I don't want to see a girl working in construction right there, with men. That's not your job, you gotta go to school and do other stuff" (Y25, M, 17, DACA).
- "...women in politics are seen in a negative aspect. They're challenged in a different way than their male counterparts" (G7, F, 21, PR).
- "When I tell people I'm a computer science major, they are like: oh, really? I thought you were something else" (U21, F, 20, DACA).

Thus, similarly to the notion that there are "White spaces" and "Hispanic spaces" in the labor market (by industry, job, or physical place within the store), there are industries,

jobs, and places considered more male or more female, more Latino or more Latina.

Accordingly, youth may not feel welcome in jobs and spaces that do not reflect their identities. The expectations of society and family can steer youth away from or towards certain jobs and they may learn to internalize these gender-based stereotypes.

#### 4.9.3 Age

Lastly, age is ranked as both positive and negative (and neutral) in the questionnaire and this view is supported by the comments youth made in the interviews. The general consensus is that age acts much less as an exclusionary factor once one is over 18:

- "There's more job opportunities if I were 18" (C29, F, 17, PR).
- "I'm in my 20's now, so I don't have any problems finding a job. Everybody is looking for someone that's over 18" (E5, 20, undoc).

It is also difficult to get hired without work experience. In addition, young people may be judged and considered irresponsible:

- "...younger people are judged and sometimes considered irresponsible" (D4, M, 16, DACA).
- "I don't like telling people my age in the workforce, just because, for the other job that I had with the workers, if I told them how old I was. It's already a minus for being a woman and 19 at that, it's just terrible. A terrible idea. They won't take me seriously" (F6, F, 19, TPS).
- "...there's stereotypes that, because you're young of age, you're not mature" (M13, F, 16, DACA).

Though age seems less of a long-term issue compared to other factors (we get older eventually), youth voices and opinions should be recognized and valued. This is true for

all youth but becomes a compounding challenge for Latino and undocumented youth. However, there are also positive attributes of young people in the work force, because young people are often eager to learn and can bring new ideas to companies.

- "I think a lot of employers are looking for young people. A lot of times, young people come with energy, new ideas, so I see it as a positive thing" (A1, M, 21, PR).
- "...that's another reason why I got the job, because I was young. He likes young people" (L12, M, 17, DACA).
- "...a lot of companies are a lot more attracted to people my age group because they're still young, they're still able to be molded, they still can learn, they still have a lot of years of productivity" (R18, F, 21, DACA).
- "I think my age really doesn't have any effect on my job, as long as you can prove what you are capable of" (I9, M, 16, PR).

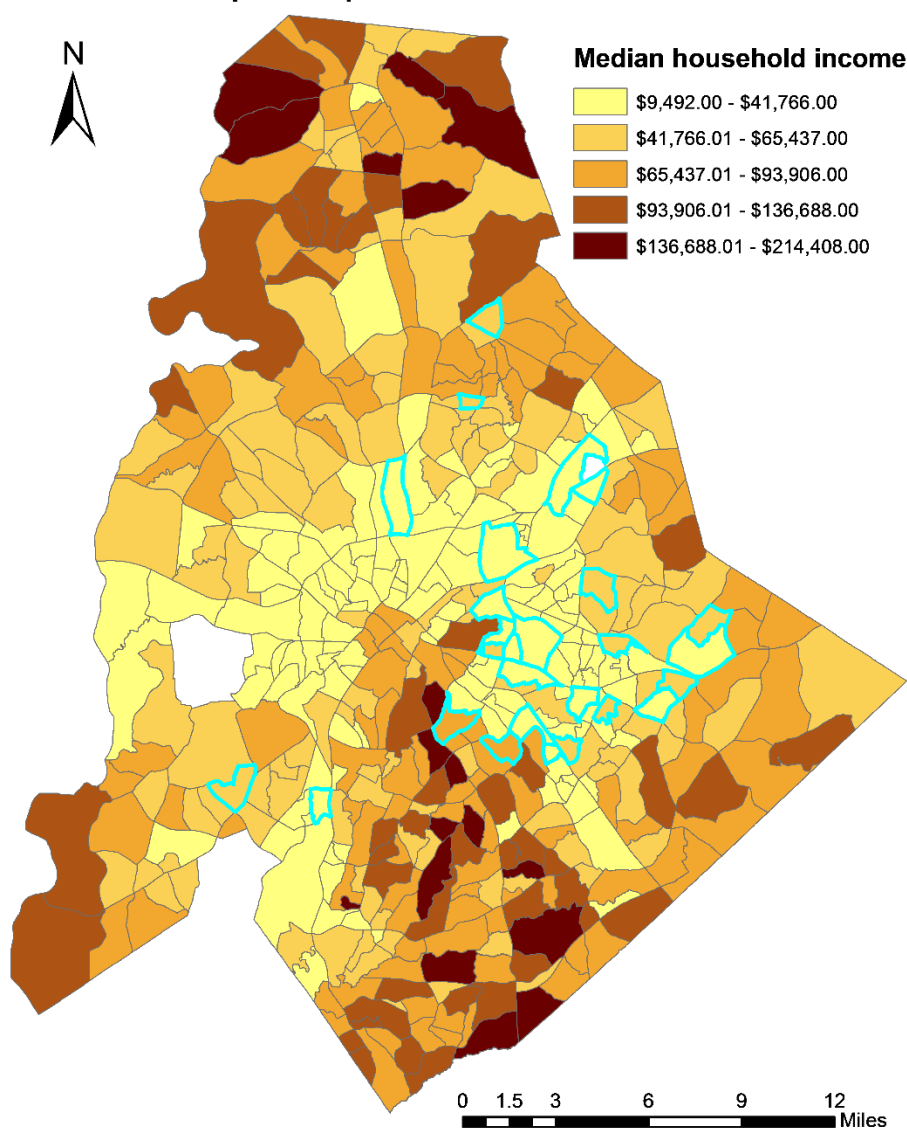
This chapter covered an array of descriptive and societal factors and how they describe and impact Hispanic immigrant youth job access. Since this study examines spatial as well as social variables, the following chapter discusses the role of space and place in this case study, as presented through the data.

## CHAPTER 5: SPATIAL DIMENSIONS OF YOUTH LABOR MARKET EXPERIENCE

As outlined in the literature review, labor market opportunities and navigation strategies are spatially contingent and have a dialectic relationship with youth lives. The ways in which space emerged from the results are mainly in relation to: neighborhood of residence, transportation, and segregation in schools. In addition, the dynamics youth encounter in the workplace and their workspaces can also be analyzed through the lens of micro-geographies of spatial in- and exclusion.

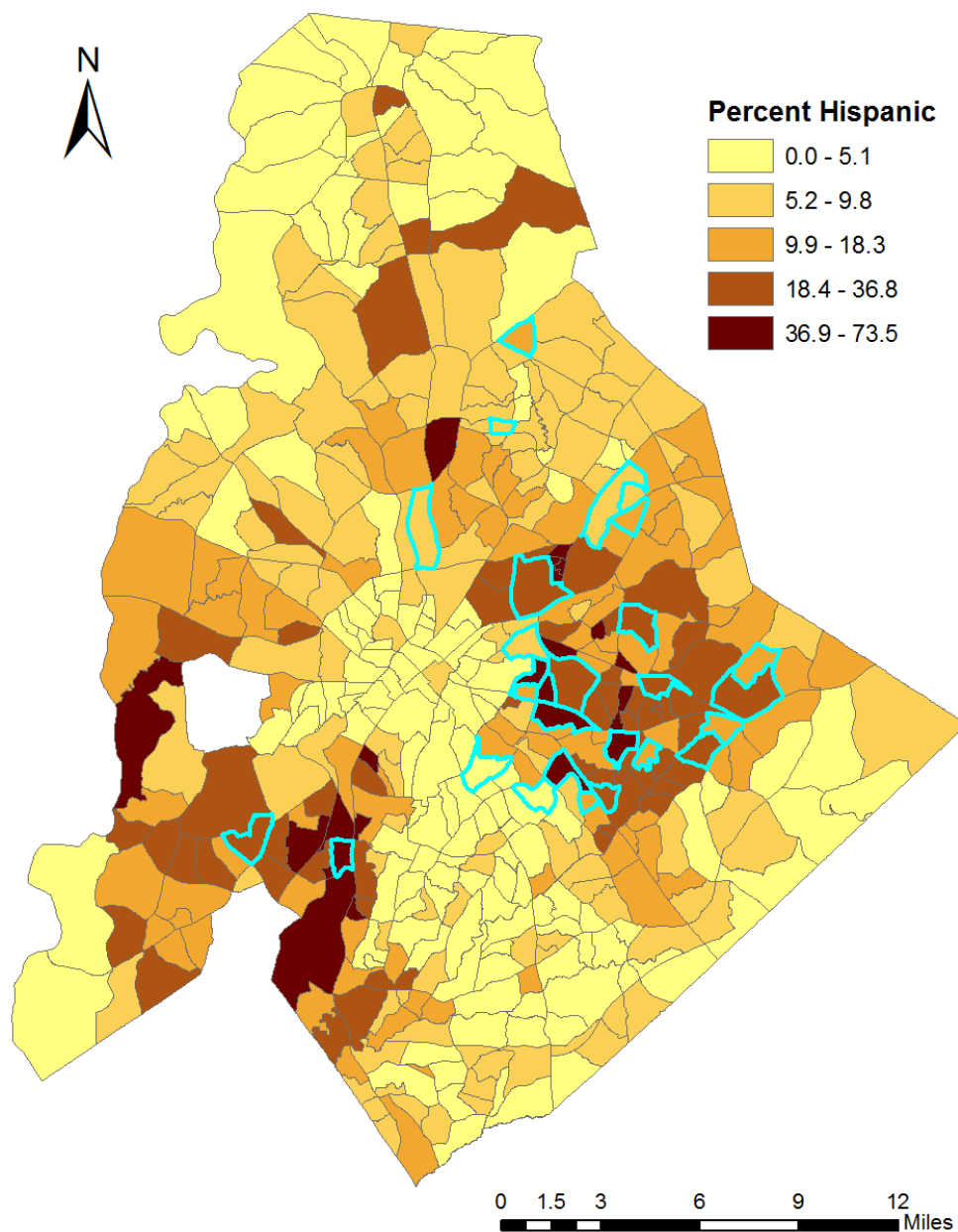
### 5.1 Participants' Neighborhoods

Participants live in various parts of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. Together, they represent 11 zip codes, 23 census tracts, and 26 Neighborhood Statistical Areas (NSAs). Figures 27 and 28 visualize the residential NSAs of youth participants, overlayed onto neighborhood data. Participants are likely to live in areas where Latinos are concentrated (though some live in areas with few Hispanics) and where median household incomes are lower than the county average.



Data source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 2009-2013 5-Year Estimates

Figure 27: Median household income by NSA, with participants' NSAs highlighted



Data source: 2013 Quality of Life Study, UNC Charlotte Urban Institute

Figure 28: Map showing the percent Hispanic by NSA, with participants' NSAs highlighted

Participants live in areas with: a higher percentage of Latinos (22.2% vs. 12.2% county average); lower than average median household incomes (\$42,409 vs. \$63,798); lower job density (1.1 vs. 1.7); lower educational attainment (26.3% of adults over 25 have a BA degree or higher vs. 41% county average); lower CMS high school proficiency

testing (26.9% vs. 40.7%); lower life expectancy (65.2 years vs. 72), lower home ownership rates (47.3% vs. 60%); lower home sales prices (\$130,308 vs. \$245,682); higher violent crime rates (6.0 vs. 4.4); higher property crime rates (41.5 vs. 33.5); and more long (>20 minutes by car) commutes (64% vs. 60%). Measures that match the average are percent adults employed (88.5% vs. 89.0%) and street connectivity (1.17 vs. 1.18). Access to a transit stop is slightly higher (76.1%) than the average (68.0%) (Table 5 and Table 6).

Table 5: Neighborhood data for participants' NSAs compared to the county average (1/2)

NSA	Per- cent La- tino	Percent adults em- ployed	House- hold income in USD	Job density (jobs per acre)	Percentage of housing units within ½-mile of a bank or credit union	Percent of adults >25 with BA degree or higher	Percentage of Charlotte- Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) students in grades 9-12 proficient in End-of-Course testing
10	9	80.0	22115.0	0.8	68.0	12.0	23.1
18	2.6	98.0	74331.0	1.7	34.0	74.0	54.5
39	20	92.0	59512.0	0.1	0.0	26.0	27.9
52	37.5	87.0	30354.0	2.3	38.0	7.0	2.7
64	11.6	86.0	34506.0	2.0	80.0	42.0	0.0
71	62.4	85.0	29914.0	0.1	92.0	13.0	36.8
87	16.5	89.0	47000.0	1.0	39.0	16.0	0.0
96	20.7	94.0	48715.0	3.5	25.0	35.0	18.2
125	9.1	91.0	40133.0	1.2	17.0	16.0	19.2
145	25.4	93.0	34732.0	0.3	5.0	17.0	52.6
162	20.4	92.0	43000.0	0.7	37.0	18.0	27.8
164	48.3	84.0	29275.0	2.1	96.0	8.0	10.0
180	31.6	90.0	61944.0	1.6	40.0	20.0	26.7
219	6	80.0	25405.0	3.0	44.0	40.0	33.3
220	12.6	91.0	43971.0	0.7	34.0	19.0	33.3
227	14.3	85.0	61415.0	0.2	0.0	37.0	38.7
229	26.3	92.0	27252.0	0.1	4.0	11.0	22.2
232	16	94.0	64615.0	0.2	28.0	45.0	32.1
235	3.7	94.0	71555.0	0.3	1.0	70.0	42.9

245	10.4	88.0	34769.0	0.7	94.0	22.0	40.0
268	17.7	89.0	44479.0	0.1	0.0	29.0	26.1
278	7.4	85.0	44706.0	0.5	0.0	46.0	35.7
314	46.5	92.0	32237.0	0.8	0.0	22.0	15.0
316	47.1	85.0	33393.0	1.6	51.0	12.0	25.0
371	22.3	78.0	31733.0	1.3	12.0	13.0	26.1
389	31.7	86.0	31581.0	1.1	42.0	14.0	30.6
<b>A</b>	<b>22.2</b>	<b>88.5</b>	<b>42,409</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>33.9</b>	<b>26.3</b>	<b>26.9</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>12.2</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>63,798</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>40.7</b>

A= Participants' NSA average

B= County average

Table 6: Neighborhood data for participants' NSAs compared to the county average (2/2)

NSA	Life expectancy in years	Percentage of housing units within ½-mile of a full-service, chain grocery store	Home owner-ship rate	Home sales price in USD	Violent crime rate per 1,000 residents	Property crime rate per 1,000 residents	Percentage of auto commuters traveling 20 minutes or more to work	Percentage of housing units within ½-mile of a transit stop
10	71	80	30	90500	13.5	78.3	43	100
18	77	31	39	425000	2.8	16.7	31	100
39	62	13	73	129000	3.3	15.5	78	5
52	64	77	5	96500	16.1	96.8	49	100
64	53	56	23	48000	3	35.1	61	100
71	55	57	15	125000	7.8	25	55	100
87	63	18	44	155500	6	30.6	58	100
96	59	29	49	128000	1.5	79.5	49	97
125	68	0	60	97000	11.3	58.8	38	33
145	70	10	53	83500	3	42.6	76	61
162	55	22	74	96500	4.2	39.2	76	100
164	57	90	22	115000	16.6	54.2	60	100
180	68	0	68	121500	2.3	48.5	73	94
219	65	12	14	105000	7.4	117.3	56	90
220	75	41	68	88000	1.7	20	74	52
227	72	0	72	114250	1.2	11.2	70	46
229	61	7	88	151250	4.5	25.9	82	19
232	58	52	88	129000	0.4	15.4	77	4
235	74	0	84	300000	0.5	14.7	58	78
245	73	0	26	108000	2.1	37.6	68	100
268	66	48	73	109500	1.1	21.1	81	100



278	55	95	24	149250	2.5	26.9	80	0
314	62	0	29	145000	6.8	29.1	69	100
316	65	61	25	103500	13	35.1	76	100
371	67	5	43	64750	19.8	78.8	64	100
389	81	15	42	109500	4.1	25.8	60	100
<b>A</b>	<b>65.2</b>	<b>31.5</b>	<b>47.3</b>	<b>130,308</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>41.5</b>	<b>63.9</b>	<b>76.1</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>245,682</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>33.5</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>68</b>

A= Participants' NSA average

B= County average

Across Charlotte/Mecklenburg County, there are 40 NSAs with over 40% Latino/Hispanic. Within the top 15 NSAs with the highest percent Latinos, 4 were included in the participant NSAs (At the census tract level, participants live in only two of the top 13 census tracts with the highest percent of Hispanics). Compared to the 15 NSAs with the highest percentages of Hispanic/Latino residents (>40% Latino), study participants lived in NSAs with an, on average:

- higher household income (\$42,409 vs. \$32,271 for the high-Latino NSAs);
- higher employment rates (88.5% vs. 82.9%);
- lower job density (1.1 vs. 2.9);
- lower financial services access (33.9 vs. 43.9);
- higher BA or higher rates (26.3% vs. 12.3%);
- higher high school proficiency testing (26.9% vs. 21.3%);
- higher life expectancy (65.2 year vs. 62.3 years);
- slightly lower home values (\$130,308 vs. \$140,668);
- higher home ownership rates (47.3% vs. 26.5%);
- lower violent crime rates (6.0 vs. 10.5);
- slightly lower property crime rates (41.5 vs. 42.5);

- more longer (>20min.) commutes (63.9% vs. 57.9%);
- slightly higher street connectivity (1.2 vs. 1.1) (Table 7).

Table 7: 2012 NSA data

NSA	Percent Latino	Household income	Percent adults employed	Percent of adults >25 with BA degree or higher	Percentage of CMS students in grades 9-12 proficient in End-of-Course testing	Job Density
Average for high-Latino (>40%) NSAs	52.6	\$32,272	82.9	12.3	21.3	2.9
Participants' NSA average	22.2	\$42,409	88.5	26.3	26.9	1.1
County average	12.2	\$63,798	89.0	41.0	40.7	1.7

Figure 29 shows the Mecklenburg County map with direct quotes from participants about the neighborhoods (NSAs) in which they live. This perceptual, experiential view can present a complementing or contrasting image to the statistical neighborhood data. For instance, a middle-income, residential neighborhood – seemingly desirable – may feel boring to youth because it lacks connectivity, things to do, and places to work. On the other hand, lower income neighborhoods – often stigmatized as undesirable places to live – may be experienced as calm and “not a bad place” by residents. This is in line with Wacquant’s (2007) conceptualization of territorial stigmatization. Furthermore, though many of the participants live in areas where the median household income is lower than the county average, the way they describe and perceive their neighborhood varies significantly, ranging from hearing shoot-outs to “very calm, very safe” neighborhoods where people are friendly.

Many quantitative variables, including housing value, race/ethnicity, and crime

expose inequalities and segregation in Charlotte. These contrasts and patterns are notable across different areas of the county (north, east, south, west), but also within smaller geographic areas. Participants comment on these larger geographic divisions in their mental maps (south Charlotte being wealthy and predominantly White, East and West Charlotte being less wealthy and more Hispanic and African American, respectively). They also experience contrasts within small geographic areas. For instance, one participant shared that “My neighborhood is a calm neighborhood complex. But the other apartments we live beside, no. Cops are out there every day, we hear gunshots. It’s bad over there” (Y25, M, 17, DACA). Another said: “We lived across in the apartments right there, we literally moved a few feet. (...) I can still remember the gun shots. I was scared. So we moved [across the street]” (X24, F, 16, citizen). In that sense, the lived experience coincides with the data. There are also ‘surprises’ that NSA-level data do not capture. For example, one of the participants lived in a trailer park in the middle of a newer, suburban area: “Where I live, it’s supposed to be a nice area, so then I feel like when people see there’s a trailer park, they are like: this shouldn’t be here” (E31, F, 19, DACA).

At the same time, being familiar with a lot of these areas, participants taught me that looks can be deceiving; a neighborhood may appear like an average residential, quiet suburb, but if neighbors are (perceived as) rude and noisy, youth will not think of it as a good place to live. As one participant noted: “Most of the houses around where I live are quiet, but a few houses down [there are] a lot of parties, a lot of fights, a lot of police” (L12, M, 17, DACA). Comparing and contrasting quantitative and qualitative data attached to place, as well as insights from residents themselves (not only outside observers) can thus provide deeper, multi-faceted understandings of neighborhood quality

of life and access to resources.

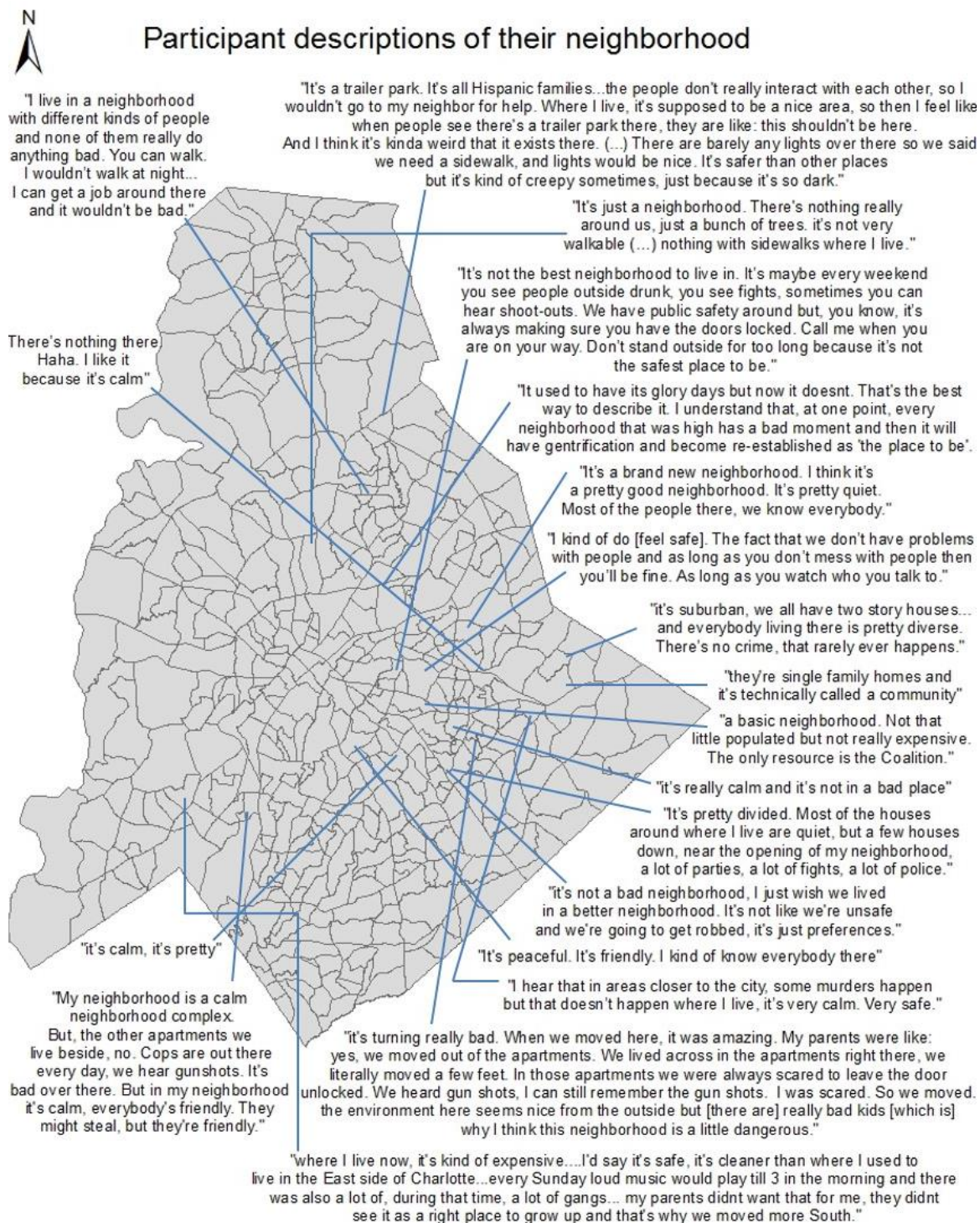


Figure 29: Participants describe their neighborhood (verbatim quotes)

In my results, neighborhood is not given as much weight as the literature would suggest. Youth have similar work and job-seeking experiences, regardless of in which neighborhood they live. There is no evidence of 'ethnic enclave' effects, as anticipated in new immigrant gateway settings, nor do participants (consistently) live in neighborhoods that face multiple dimensions of deprivation and exclusion. Some are integrated within the general middle-class areas, whereas others live in lower-income neighborhoods with higher percentages of immigrants and minorities. They also use different descriptors to describe where they live (Figure 29).

- "I work so much and go to school and I'm never home, only to sleep" (F6, F, 19, TPS).
- "I don't think my neighborhood affects me to get a certain job because I'm just in an okay neighborhood" (P16, F, 18, DACA).
- "...my parents were always really strict so if I would grow up living in apartments down here, I see the girls and guys that always go out and walk down the streets and whatever. I feel like if I lived here, my mom still wouldn't let me go out. So I think it's the way my parents raised me made the person I am now [not the neighborhood I grew up in]" (U21, F, 20, DACA).

When discussing neighborhood influences on navigating labor market opportunities, the leading point that surfaced was how seeking work close to home is a common strategy among youth as they look for their first job(s). This was primarily for transportation purposes:

- "Since I don't have transportation I've been looking for jobs close to where I live" (H34, M, 19, DACA).

- "I applied to Publix, Harris Teeter, Plato's Closet, and in the Mall, Carolina Place Mall. The reason why I chose those places was based on my ride, how to get there, transportation, that's a big thing for me, since everything is so far away and since I live far away from those places I wouldn't be able to take the bus, I would have to walk a lot, so the closest thing was IHOP" (D30, F, 17, DACA).
- "...my mom wants me to get a job around my house so it's more convenient for us" (H8, F, 16, DACA).
- "...if I got a job around here I could get there by foot, so it's perfect for me. If I had a car I would rather have a job at the mall or something. But since I don't have that opportunity yet I would rather have a job I can walk to instead of my parents having to drive me to work, I think it would be easier for all of us" (K11, F, 16, PR).

Though this may be the case for youth in general, for youth with undocumented parents, there is the added pressure to be independent in your own mobility to avoid the risk of parents getting pulled over and possibly deported. This weight cannot be underestimated.

Having to work close to home limits youth job opportunities at the moment, especially for youth living in the car-dependent, spread-out suburbs. The hopes are that youth are able to overcome this barrier as they obtain their license and a vehicle. That said, if DACA is discontinued or if DACA recipients are no longer able to obtain driver's licenses, their spatial mobility will be severely restricted. In addition, many families cannot afford more than one car so youth have to share a car, carpool, take public transit, or walk. Furthermore, the lack of professional jobs close to neighborhoods of residence may limit youth transitions into the professional labor market in the future ("spatial

mismatch”).

That said, there are evidently perceptions of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ neighborhoods in Charlotte. This matches Bauder’s (2001, p.45) articulation that “Neighborhoods often carry labels of ‘ghetto,’ ‘deprived’ or ‘underclass’ areas, whereby place suggests an imposed cultural identity that is associated with skill level, work ethic and competence in the labor market. Although socially constructed, these labels shape employers’ and educators’ labor market expectations of residents.” Employers as well as participants themselves and others around them have certain ideas about what are desirable or undesirable areas and that may influence how they view people (including job candidates) from those areas. These constructions are therefore internally as well as externally created.

- “I would prefer to work in the east side, south side, or university area because I feel those are the safest work places (...) I’m pretty prejudice of the north and west side. I am sure that it would be easier to find a job there because of my background but I want to strive for better” (H34, M, 19, DACA).
- [Referring to Eastside]: “I would not like to work in this area because I often feel uncomfortable at restaurants, businesses, etc. because it’s “ghetto”” (J10, F, 16, PR).
- "I tell them I live here, they say it’s a good area. The crime rate is low and everything. They’ll be like: he’s a good person. Well, not necessarily ‘he’s a good person’, but he must be surrounded by good people. (..) when people look out for a job and they look for at where you live, I also feel like that also means something about you" (I35, M, 16, PR).

In Zaami's (2012) study about socio-spatial exclusion of Ghanaian immigrant youth in Toronto, negative labels associated with the neighborhood the participants lived in was one of the most prominent themes. However, neighborhood perceptions and place-based stereotyping were only sometimes mentioned in my study. This may be because my participants lived in a variety of neighborhoods, rather than one, or it could be that the other factors at play overrode neighborhood influences on job access. Such place-based stereotyping can also work the other way round, Manwaring (1984) suggested: firms seek workers from immigrant areas based on the assumption they are willing to work hard for little money. In this situation, the stereotype of 'hard-working' is not only transferred to immigrants themselves, but also to the places and neighborhoods the immigrant group inhabits. In a study about labor market discrimination, Bertrand and Mullainathan, (2003) saw that applicants living in better neighborhoods receive more callbacks than those living in less well-off areas, but that this effect did not differ by race. Either way, the literature suggests the control lies in the hands of the employer and residents of stigmatized neighborhoods deal with the consequences. Though there are certainly power differentials and barriers to moving, individuals have some influence in shaping the culture and representation of their area.

There is no convincing evidence in my study that racial residential segregation reduce job opportunities for Latino immigrants, as Kain (1968) argued it did for African American communities. Similarly, neighborhood effects on job access are not as strongly confirmed as in other studies (e.g. Zaami, 2012; Wilson, 1997).<sup>31</sup> Unlike Bauder's (2002)

---

<sup>31</sup> A reason for this may be that I did not keep this variable constant. I think the study benefitted from gaining perspectives from youth who live in a variety of neighborhoods; it exposed the commonalities in



study of urban neighborhoods and the cultural exclusion of youths in San Antonio, Texas, my findings do not support the idea that young people's career ambitions vary by neighborhood of residence. Though these patterns may hold true with a greater sample size, my participants seemed to have similar ambitions, regardless of where they live. As portrayed in the descriptive results chapter, participants live in a range of neighborhoods. They also utilize familial and other interest-based networks that traverse the urban and suburban space and extend beyond neighborhood of residence. Even youth who live in areas with a high concentration of Hispanics do not appear to seek out help or support from neighbors in the ways described in ethnic enclave literature. When seeking jobs, youth are least likely to go to their neighbors and there is little mention of neighborhood-based resources other than schools and the Latin American Coalition (which is a city-wide resource in an area with many Latin American immigrants). That said, there may be instances where employers – or participants themselves – label certain lower-income areas as dangerous or ‘ghetto’ and subsequently ascribing inferiority to the residents, which may reduce residents’ work opportunities (Ellen and Turner, 1997; Waldinger, 1997). In turn, other employers may recruit specifically in neighborhoods with many immigrants (around day labor sites, immigrant-owned businesses, and boards at Latin American grocery stores), in search of people willing to do any type of job for low wages and in poor working conditions (England, 1993).

That said, youth participants did specify that they mainly search for work in the area where they live due to transportation challenges. In other words, jobs outside their

---

their experiences based on documentation status and ethnicity, despite differences in SES and neighborhood.

neighborhood may not be an option and, if there are only few jobs/industries in their area, they are limited to those jobs/industries. As such, spatial mismatch may be occurring to some degree, but not necessarily in the same way as originally described by Kain, with inner-city Blacks facing high unemployment rates. Instead, Latino youth are able to obtain jobs, but not always in the industry of their choice. The return of jobs to the inner city means that some youth now work downtown, which is typically easier to access by public transit from where they live than the outer suburbs are. The suburbanization and dispersal of immigrant settlement also means less concentrated job competition. Though some youth expressed feelings of feeling “entrapped,” with limited access to transportation and job opportunities in their neighborhood, most were able to navigate this by carpooling with friends and family. Others had their own vehicle, giving them increased mobility and access to jobs across town.

Still, space mediates other labor market-related processes such as where companies chose to locate. Due to higher (perceptions of) crime or other negative place-based stereotypes about lower-income and immigrant-dense areas, companies may steer away from these neighborhoods, making those jobs geographically more out of reach for certain residents. Youth participants view their job opportunities in the future as wide (geographically and otherwise), but their immediate work options as spatially and sectorally limited. For instance, within the city, some youth believe they have more chance applying for jobs in certain areas over others: “Because of my ethnicity, I don’t get the jobs in the south side” (H34, M, 19, DACA). Also, Hispanic youth may feel like certain ‘White’ companies will not hire them: “let’s say Nordstrom, I don’t think I’ve ever seen a Hispanic working there. Ever. But if it’s some cook job across the street...”

(L12, M, 17, DACA). “Corporate America seems to look down upon people who are different than who’s already dominating that field” (J36, M, 21, DACA), another participants observed. Place-based perceptions of certain areas as “good” or “bad” places to work or live also influence where youth wish to work. To what extent youth feel welcome, e.g. based on their skin color, also impacts the spaces they seek out work in, at the company level and in terms of the area within Charlotte or area within the US. These perceptions may limit where Hispanic youth apply, which can, in turn restrict their job options and their ability to build networks in diverse fields, with non-Latinos, and in various parts of town.

The spatial also emerged in other ways: for example, the work space itself can also act as an important illustrator of socio-spatial inclusion and exclusion, a micro-geography in which ethnicity-based stereotypes play out. Dynamics of the work space itself manifest themselves across various geographies. At the micro-level, a work space can represent how certain social groups are viewed in broader society. For instance, participants described how they were expected to work ‘in the back’ with other Latinos/minorities, away from public view within the work space, e.g.: "they asked for my ethnicity and so I put Hispanic, they expected me to come work in the back, where everyone works the hard labor jobs. And I kind of felt like I wasn’t respected at that time, because I had purposefully asked for a certain position when they asked me for something totally different" (D4, M, 16, DACA). Another shared similar story: "when they hired me originally, in my belief it was that they needed bilinguals at the register. But, when I actually started working, I was in the back the entire time cooking. They had two Hispanics in the back" (G7, F, 21, PR). It is suggested that being Hispanic, or

‘looking Hispanic,’ becomes a marker for which employers decide to place an individual in the public eye or outside of it. Zukin (1995) further suggested that whether employees in the restaurant industry work in the front or in the back depends on their cultural capital, ”a repertory of symbols [that] affect the relationship between individuals, social networks and economic structures” (Fernandez Kelly, 1994, p.100), matches those associated with the task.

The spatial is also tied to Charlotte and the New South as a critical context, as further explored in a subsequent chapter. Latino youth identity formations in the South in relation to work and others, with one participant even referring to the emergence of a new Southern Latino identity. Despite these distinct experiences related to place and place-based factors, many of the examples in this dissertation are emblematic of larger trends across the nation. The nuances can be unique to the South but they are part of larger experiences of exclusion happening across the board in this country.

## 5.2 Transportation

This study explored the various spatial mobilities and ways in which youth traverse across space in their daily lives. Participants with cars may cover extensive ground throughout the day (not always to their liking), while others with limited mobility due to lack of transportation options. In terms of current transportation to work, 2 participants walk, 11 drive, 11 get a ride with someone else, 2 take the bus, and 1 bikes (4 participants identified two means of transportation). Their average travel time ranges from 5 to 60 minutes, averaging a 20-minute commute. It is worth noting that, though Charlotte has some bus lines and sidewalks, it is still overwhelmingly a car-dependent city, built for auto mobiles rather than people, and youth transportation mode responses

reflect this. "Everything is really far away in Charlotte," explains a participant, "For the resources, you have to drive far" (N14, F, 21, DACA).

Access and connectivity in Charlotte are also neighborhood-dependent: while some areas have public transportation, bike lanes, and/or sidewalks, others do not. Many suburbs are spread out far from the denser urban core. This influences how youth physically access work. For example, one youth who lives in a suburban area describes that, in terms of close work options, "I'm sure I could walk there, but it would take probably thirty minutes" (A27, F, 16, U visa). A participant living in an inner-ring suburb of East Charlotte argues that "downtown is easy access and as well as the Eastside. Like, it's just easy to get there, I don't have to drive a long way since I don't drive. And it's faster because I could easily take the city bus" (D4, M, 16, DACA).

Another participant who resides closer to Mint Hill, a Mecklenburg County town adjacent to Charlotte, said: "the neighborhood I live in is very good because, first of all, it's right beside my school, so I can easily walk there or ride the bus. But it's also, there's a lot of businesses around and that's good because you can easily get jobs" (J10, F, 16, PR). As discussed in the previous section, participants are generally content with where they live and improvements to the physical landscape and their connectivity to jobs is not mentioned as an avenue for change.

Transportation did not come up as a major theme in the interviews; however, it did in the mental maps and journal entries. This highlights the importance of mixed-methods to gain insight into different social and spatial components of everyday life. In the bigger scheme of job access, transportation was overshadowed by other factors, but on a day-to-day basis, the ability – or lack thereof – to be spatially mobile came up

repeatedly. Not all youth have trouble with transportation, because they have a car or their parents drive them. Although youth do not seem to be completely excluded from the labor market by not having a car, most describe how they have to figure out rides to work and it may not always work:

- "Always having to find a ride to work or taking public transit last minute" (Q17, M, 16, undoc).
- "I just have friends who can give rides to some places when I actually need them quickly or I cannot ride the bus because it is taking too long" (G33, M, 16, DACA).
- "I had a friend who also ended up working at the mall for a little bit, but she didn't have a car or a license at the time, so it was hard for her to keep the job because she would have to call out a lot since she didn't have a ride or she would get there late" (N14, F, 21, DACA).

Surprisingly perhaps, the contrary also holds true for some youth, in the sense that mobility (having a car and a license) became a burden to them because driving takes up a lot of time or meant they received additional responsibilities. One participant describes in her journal how "usually I drive around for about half of my day" and that she has extra work- or family duties because she owns a car" (R19, F, 21, DACA).

### 5.3 Segregation in Schools

School segregation relates to the neighborhood of residence, but also goes beyond that, because the schools and classrooms are even more segregated than neighborhoods (by ethnicity and SES). Though there is already a substantial amount research about this, it is notable how frequently this came up, even though I did not ask specifically about it.

One participant even helped guide his younger siblings to charter schools so they would not have to attend the under-resourced neighborhood school he attended. He shared: "if I had children, I would've wanted them to go to schools that had resources more resources that I went to. (...) they've seen the life style of the people that go there and once your eyes are opened to what is available I feel like you have more of a tendency to lean towards wanting that (...) But when I was going to school and passing by the schools, I saw a lot of negativity, violence, things like that, so I didn't want them [my younger siblings] to get into that culture. So yes, I did influence them in what choices to make" (J36, M, 21, DACA).

Yet, participants mainly commented on how classes of different levels are segregated by race/ethnicity within their (more diverse) schools and how that affects them:

- "...there's definitely a divide between AP students, IB students, and students who just take regular Honors courses, and students who are in regular standard classes. (...) [Latino students are] more likely to be in standard, like Standard Honors or standard classes" (A27, F, 16, visa).
- "The area where I live, it's a lot of White people but at school it's very cultured and stuff. There's this thing at school where it's the main building for just regular people and then there's the AIS building and most of that building is just White people" (J10, F, 16, PR).
- "...at my new school, it's all students that had to pass and take several steps and everybody there had to have a good GPA to enter, there's only 3 Hispanics in that school. There's only about 200 students but still, there's only about 3 Hispanics in

there (...) I think it's mostly that they're not as informed, because their parents...most of us, my Latino friends, their parents don't speak that much English and if the parents don't speak that much English, they're not informed as much so they miss out on a lot of opportunities" (M13, F, 16, DACA).

- "It was eye-opening to me to sit in a class one day and see this is an AP class and I understand this is preparing me for college but then you go down to an honors level class and it's a whole different story. (...) all the way down to standard classes, you have mostly the minorities, the ones that are most likely to drop out of school" (Q17, M, 16, undoc).

These divisions can be experienced as isolating:

- "...in high school, I was the only Hispanic in all of my classes. (...) I wouldn't feel empowered in any way, to succeed. I was actually rejected from Honors classes even though I had all A's. (...) he didn't specifically say that I was incapable of taking honors classes, but the direction of the conversation went there. Also, I tried to take AP courses, they always told me to wait until my senior year and when I waited until my senior year and wanted to take AP courses, there were juniors and sophomores in my classes that were White, American students. It was that, realizing that I had been sort of banned from this group that wanted to have higher achievements" (G7, F, 21, PR).
- "I would have higher classes so I would not be with anybody Hispanic so to me it was like stuck-up people. Like: what is she doing here? (...) I'd be begging, crying, screaming not to go" (T20, F, 18, DACA).



Figure 30 provides an overview of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) with the highest percentages of Hispanic student and high schools attended by participants. Though Hispanic students are overrepresented at certain schools, they are also spread out across the metropolitan area. There are significant differences among these schools in terms of percent Hispanic students, economically disadvantaged students (EDS) rates, SAT scores and graduation rates. EDS rates vary from 35.1%, in the school with the lowest percent Hispanic students, to 86.6%, in the school (that is still open) with the highest percent Hispanic students. These numbers do not reflect the breakdown by classroom or course level (e.g. AP, Honors level, Standard level). Participants' comments would suggest more segregation by class and race would emerge from such data.

School name	Percent Hispanic students 2011-2012[1]	Area in Charlotte	EDS rates 2013-2014[2]	Graduation rates 2011-2012, 2013-2014 [3]	Hispanic graduate rates 2012-2013	SAT scores 2011-2012	SAT rate 2011-2012	Teacher turnover 2011-2012
E.E. Waddell*	37	Southwest	79	51.2	N/A	1214	39.4	13%
Garinger High	26	East	86.6	65.4; 86.6	82.4	1168	39.8	27% **
Independence High	21	East	54.9	79.4; 88.6	77.2	1409	55.4	11%
Vance High	21	Northeast	79.4	81.6; 84.2	73.6	1262	58.4	31%
Olympic High	20	Southwest	45.2	81.4; 91.5	88.2	1341	61	25%
South Mecklenburg High	17	South	44.9	87.9; 90.8	89.1	1512	71.9	14%
East Mecklenburg High	16	East	61	79.7; 83.5	73	1463	54.6	14%
North Mecklenburg High	14	North	59.1	80.5; 88.0	82	1481	69.5	20%
Philip O. Berry Academy of Technology	13	West	65.8	90.8; 91.8	94.4	1353	78.4	25%
Hopewell High	11	North	45.3	78.7; 86.5	80	1390	67.3	14%
Cato Middle College High	8	Northeast	35.1	>95.0; >95.0	>95.0	1605	94.9	25%

\*In 2010-2011. This school closed in 2011. \*\*2010-2011 data

Figure 30: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) with the highest percentages of Hispanic student and high schools attended by participants

Charlotte-Mecklenburg has been criticized for its (re)segregation of schools

(“Half of Charlotte’s schools have at least 80% of students of one race” (Fulwood, 2015))

and for concentrated poverty (61 schools had poverty rates of at least 75% and 14 schools had at least 90% (Helms, 2015)). 2011-2012 and 2013-2014 graduation rates of Hispanic students tend to be lower than those of their Black and White counterparts, especially in schools with higher percentages of Hispanic students, though they have improved in recent years (Chesser, 2013; NC Report Card). These trends impact youth:

- "I remember junior year, there was a family that owned a store and I was buying something and there was a father and a daughter and the father asked me 'what are you doing after you graduate high school?'. I said 'I'm going to college'. It was almost an immediate answer. And the girl, his daughter, said 'that's what they all say'. And at first I was like: what?! It kinda hurt because I understood that the Latino graduation rate from high school is extremely low. Of course we know that when we grow up. I think it was two years ago that we increased in college but it was nowhere near as it was in previous years. I understand some people think: what's the point? I'm not going to get a job afterwards" (F32, M, 21, DACA).

School segregation and experiences matter because the quality of secondary education individuals receive contributes to whether or not they go on and succeed in college.

Furthermore, the environment and experience in the educational system in these formative years shape how individuals interact socially, view themselves, and perceive institutions. Schools – through their policies, administrators and teachers – send messages to their students about whether their lives and futures matter and how society values them. School reputations was also mentioned as having a negative impact on youth job opportunities, as noted by a participant in the questionnaire.

- "...teachers, they see that, they treat you like you're not as capable of doing something, they lower expectations. They don't mean harm by doing that; they're just trying to help you out. They know you're struggling and they try to lower their expectations but I think that's a bad thing" (S19, M, 18, DACA).
- "...you get disappointed by your own school because schools don't help you out. (...) the Hispanics, they really don't pay attention because they know we just come to have fun in the United States, make disasters. And they're like 'oh, they just come and make a mess over here.' (...) In my school, no one is your friend" (Y25, M, 17, DACA).

Lower expectations for minorities not only affect younger students (Villenas and Deyhle, 1999) but also those at the doctoral and professor level as well (Solorzano, 1998; Bell, 1995; Solorzano and Yosso, 2001).

Public schools – particularly at the primary and secondary level – are a path to integration but can also be considered a foundation of segregation. Schools can be the central place where children and adolescents mix and learn how to work in environments with cultural and racial diversity. However, given the segregated nature of schools and classrooms, schools become the place where children learn about segregation and inequalities. In *Tools of Exclusion*, Ferri and Connor (2005) discuss exclusionary practices in mainstream and special education classrooms in which race and disability act as interactive social constructs. "Schools uphold and reinforce the dominant beliefs of society. As such, they are examples of racism and ableism in practice" (p.470).

<b>University/College</b>	<b>Percent Hispanic</b>	<b>Area in Charlotte</b>
University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNC Charlotte)	7.4% (1,897 individuals), Spring 2015	Northeast
Johnson C Smith University (JCSU)	6.2% (85 individuals)	Slightly west of center city
Central Piedmont Community Colleges (CPCC)	10.1% (3,009 individuals) for curriculum programs; 14.3% (4,532) for extension programs, 2013-2014 data	Various locations. Largest location is slightly east of center city

Figure 31: Two- and four-year institutions attended by participants

The main themes that emerged from the interviews, questionnaires, mental maps, and journal entries are discussed in this chapter, with direct participant quotes to illustrate and support them. The following chapter interprets these findings from a more analytical perspective, using the conceptual framework of socio-spatial inclusion and exclusion. In addition, it discusses how youth, within the constraints and self-determinations of their environment and circumstances, develop strategies to improve their job opportunities.

## CHAPTER 6: SOCIO-SPATIAL INCLUSION, EXCLUSION AND STRATEGIC PRACTICES

While the previous two chapters have talked about the social and spatial as distinct, it is actually the interplay between the two that is compounding the experience of immigrant youth as they navigate the labor market. Since the two cannot be separated, this chapter focuses on how they work together to create policies and practices of socio-spatial inclusion and exclusion for Hispanic immigrant youth accessing work. This chapter also acts as a more analytical discussion and reflection on the data presented in the preceding two chapters and as a foundation for a discussion about how youth engage in strategic socio-spatial practice as they navigate the complexities of labor market entry and experience

### 6.1 Socio-spatial Inclusion/Exclusion

Despite significant differences in personalities and levels of awareness among participants, dominant themes and several common narratives about the interplay between social and spatial in-/exclusion emerged from the data. These narratives held true across age, neighborhood of residence, and gender differences, and are predominantly shaped by being an immigrant and being Hispanic.

Returning to Ruiz-Tagle's (2012) dimensions of socio-spatial exclusion, we see the following trends:

- *Physical*

- Youth try to work close to home because they often do not have access to a car and or depending on rides (from parents who may not have a license). However, not all youth live close to (potential) employment options and physical proximity to jobs does not mean the youth will be able to obtain or willing to apply for those jobs. Though there does not seem to be a drastic spatial or skills mismatch in this case, residential segregation by income means that all lower income children and youth often end up in schools with fewer resources, thereby indirectly impacting their access to higher education and professional networks.
- *Functional*
  - Socioeconomic and immigration status restrict youth access to opportunities and services. Despite living in Charlotte for over a decade, DACAmented youth pay out-of-state tuition, making college almost impossible, even for middle class families. They are not eligible for financial aid and can only apply for a very limited number of highly competitive scholarships. Even youth with permanent residency struggle to pay for higher education. Many immigrant high school students do not even try to go to college because it is outside their financial reach.
- *Relational*
  - First-generation Americans, similarly to first-generation college students, often cannot ask their parents for advice about their careers and are dependent on an outside mentor (e.g. a teacher, counselor, or community organization representative) to guide them in the process of applying for

jobs. Not having access to (reliable) information or knowing what questions to ask, only the few immigrant students who show initiative will gain a mentor and be able to take advantage of opportunities available to them. Tapping into jobs outside fields where many Latino parents are working – construction, landscaping, and cleaning – is also tough. This is a common experience among the participants; it is quite easy to find *a* job, but how do I get *the* job I really want? People are not always used to seeing Latinos work in other industries and Latino youth may not have the connections to break into them.

- *Symbolic*
  - Immigrants – and Latinos in particular – are constantly being referred to as “illegal aliens.” Processes of otherization and dehumanization, e.g. by politicians and media, distance immigrants from other social groups, confining full social and economic integration, even for those who have been in the US for over a decade. As Villenas and Deyhle (1999, p. 414) phrased it: “For Latinos/as, racism is evidenced in their racialization as the monolithic Hispanic Other (Hidalgo, 1998); it is evidenced in their construction in the public sphere as criminal and undeserving, and in the use of language in the public rhetoric (i.e., wetback, illegals) that dehumanizes Latinos/as and serves to justify the violence against them.” Even seemingly positive stereotypes can backfire; the term ‘hard-working’ is often used to characterize Hispanics, but this may lead to exploitation.

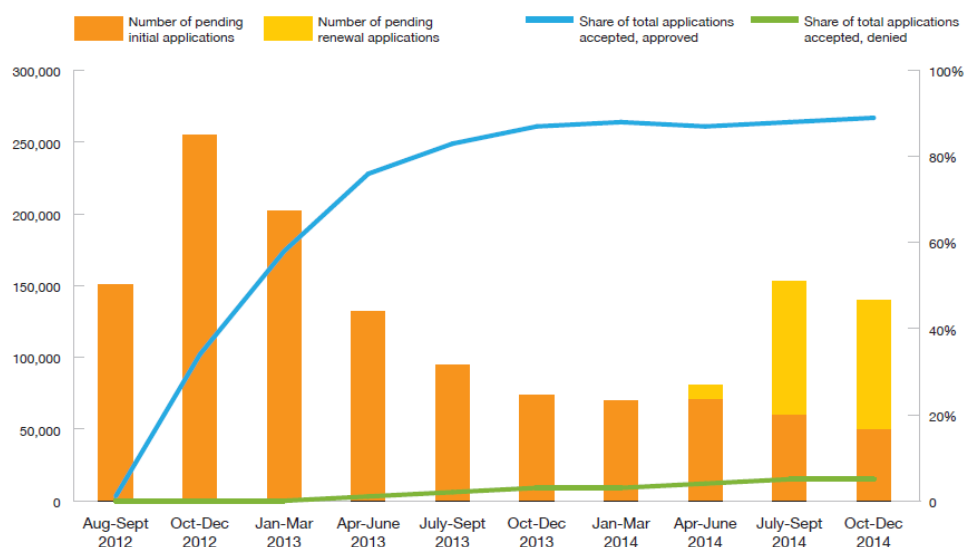
Some participants may face one or two of these struggles, whereas others face all of them. Multiple dimensions of exclusion make the transition from school to work particularly challenging for 1.5-generation Hispanic immigrant youth. Boundary constructions in youth's everyday lives are maintained through a range of federal and state policies, and reinforced by interactions with, e.g., educational institutions, employers, and authorities. "You're driving and you're just hoping this police officer doesn't pull me over because of my physical appearance" (F6, F, 19, TPS), shares one young woman. Youth encounter the "policing" of brown bodies, not solely by law enforcement officials but potentially by anyone they come into contact with.

The process into the labor market is shaped by a variety of factors, ranging from broader, large-scale to individual-level variables – many of which have impacts that traverse across scales. For example, national, state and local immigration policies feed into public and political debates about immigration and migrants, and dictate individual-level statuses. US citizen and permanent resident youth are legally not affected by anti-undocumented immigrant policies, though they may have family members who are, and broader anti-immigrant sentiments impact all people who 'look foreign.'

Short-term job access is facilitated by DACA but long-term career uncertainties remain. Those who are or were undocumented know how limited options for work are without a social security number. Many youth have benefitted greatly from DACA, because now they can work and get a driver's license, which means an income and spatial mobility. Batalova and colleagues (2014) estimated that "as of June 2012 approximately 1.2 million were immediately eligible [for DACA], 473,000 were future-eligible, and 426,000 would be eligible if they enrolled in a qualifying education program or pursued



their GED” (Singer et al, 2015, p.4). If the eligible individuals, Approximately 723,575 applied through December 31, 2015 (Figure 32). Charlotte accounted for approximately 4,800 applicants through September, 2013 (Singer et al, 2015 using USCIS data).



Note: Data are for applications received through December 31, 2014.

Source: Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Biometrics Capture System, CIS Consolidated Operational Repository (CISCOR), February 2015.

Figure 32: DACA applications and renewals by quarter, August 2012 - December 2014.  
Source: Singer, et al. (2015, p.8)

Applying for DACA is not an easy task and many of the eligible individuals have yet to apply due to the cost and the complicated paperwork. Assistance is available but, especially in emerging gateway cities such as Charlotte, limited and the fact that immigrants are spread out across the city adds to the challenge of outreach and service access (Singer et al, 2015). In addition, individuals may fear exposing themselves and their family members if they apply for DACA. For instance, one participant recalled that: "my mom was, like: just try [applying for DACA]. I thought we were gonna waste a lot of money just to get this. She's like; if it's worth it, I don't care what I have to pay. So we

had a long talk and after I decided to do it” (T20, F, 18, DACA). In addition, I found there is a significant amount of fear and uncertainty about one's future career that is tied to not having a legal status and having to renew DACA every two years. This is also experienced by youth with other temporary visas, such as a U visa<sup>32</sup> and Temporary Protected Status (TPS).

Though participants are grateful for DACA and the essential doors to work experience it has opened, much uncertainty remains and this infiltrates youth lives and hopes. Immigration policy sends a signal to migrants about how they are viewed by the state. It is a way to separate who belong and who do not, who are protected and who are not, who qualify as American and who do not. Lacking a federal immigrant integration strategy, the immigration policies often determine the extent to which integration is possible.

The lack of knowledge and understanding about DACA on the part of the employers needs more emphasis. Over three years after DACA was implemented, the benefits and remaining challenges have unfolded. Despite striking changes in job access, DACA feels more as an appeasement, a temporary band aid, rather than a long-term solution. There remains a disconnect between goals of the policy and how it is playing out in reality, leaving us to question whether DACA was an empty political gesture or real path to integration.

Employers are not the only ones lacking awareness about immigration policies

---

<sup>32</sup>“The U visa provides eligible victims with nonimmigrant status in order to temporarily remain in the United States (U.S.) while assisting law enforcement. If certain conditions are met, an individual with U nonimmigrant status may adjust to lawful permanent resident status” (DHS, p2). The U nonimmigrant visa was created by Congress in 2000 and, if granted, is valid for four years (USCIS 2014).

and their implications. Youth themselves and their families may also be mis- or under-informed regarding these matters. Most notably, at the time of the interview, some of the younger youth were still unaware of their status and its full repercussions. In the questionnaire responses (Figure 21), immigration status was considered having the strongest negative impact, as a result of a high number of DACAmented participants. Policies (particularly state and federal) were also viewed as negatively influencing youth job opportunities, predominantly in relation to in-state tuition and federal immigration laws. Apart from those, youth had limited knowledge about policies and therefore ranked them as ‘neutral.’ A complex, multi-scalar immigration system that is changing and may vary case by case is a culprit. Furthermore, mainstream media pick up on certain policies and spread information about them, even though this information may not be correct or hold true for all immigrants across space. This information then gets further disseminated via secondary media sources and social media, perpetuating myths and misperceptions. When searching online, sources – even official ones – often provide conflicting or vague information, leaving youth, employers, and society in general confused. This is problematic because when a certain policy, e.g. in-state tuition, applies to someone or not, makes a tremendous difference in whether or not they can access higher education, with all the consequential doors it opens.

At this point, participants believe they suffer from “skills mismatch” because they need a college or graduate degree in order to be considered for their dream career. In other words, they are not (yet) able to apply for a large number of the jobs because they do not have the appropriate skill set. Given their age, this is understandable. The extent to which they can overcome this “skills mismatch” and gain access to the professional

workforce largely depends on their access to higher education (which, as discussed, is restricted due to documentation status and/or SES), but it is also contingent upon the extent to which Latinos are ‘accepted’ into professional jobs and networks. In addition, for those who are currently undocumented or on temporary visas, their ability to live and work in the US legally is fully contingent upon their visa renewal or access to a permanent solution, thereby overriding educational, economic, and racial factors.

In terms of labor market segregation and place, quantitative and qualitative data incorporated in this dissertation show that foreign-born Hispanics in the Charlotte area are overrepresented in construction, landscaping, cleaning and restaurants and underrepresented in other sectors. This labor market segregation seems more powerful than residential segregation. Parkin’s (1979) concepts of social and exclusionary closure are also present in my case study. Undocumented individuals are excluded from – in theory all, in practice most – jobs, loans, health care, and driver’s licenses, thereby heavily reducing the spaces in which they can be present. Even in those spaces, they live in fear of deportation and harassment. With a social security number in hand, DACAmented youth have been able to avoid this complete exclusionary closure, but are still constantly reminded that they ‘do not belong’, with the demarcations on their driver’s license, reduced financial access to higher education, and potential challenges in the hiring process. These are mainly policy-driven exclusions. Moreover, all Hispanic immigrant youth risk social closure from certain spaces or certain jobs based on skin color, because others give them ‘looks’ of non-belonging or would rather hire a Caucasian person. One participant recalls: “I like to spend time in the EpiCenter and there’s lot of people that are business workers and especially they are White and when

they see a Hispanic in the EpiCenter, they are looking at you weird, like: what are they doing here? And I felt like it's a big effect, it's a big impact" (D4, M, 16, DACA).

Implicit or conscious bias may be at play. Accordingly, some 1.5-generation Hispanic immigrant youth face limited resistance and challenges, whereas others encounter one barrier after another.

The example of Latino immigrant youth is one of many instances across (Western) space and time that illustrates how differences are constructed and how people are systematically in-/excluded socially and spatially from society. At the same time, Sibley (1995) reminds us to pay attention to signs of resistance and examples where marginalized people are "carving out spaces of control" (p. 76). Latino youth area perfect example of this. Accordingly, what if we use Ruiz-Tangle's categorization to organize socio-spatial *inclusion*?

- *Physical*
  - Some residential concentrations of Latinos in Charlotte exist but there is also scattered settlement across the urban and suburban landscape. Many participants are integrated in middle-income suburbs with non-Latinos and US-born residents.
- *Functional*
  - By being bilingual, bicultural, flexible, open-minded, and ambitious, participants argued they create opportunities for themselves that their peers may not have. Motivated students are recognized and offered positions in their school or college.
- *Relational*

- Participant leverage familial and non-familial connections in order to gain work experience. Certain employers looking to enhance their company's diversity, are attracted to 1.5-generation Hispanic youth because they add ethnic diversity. They have grown up in the US but maintain an immigrant mentality towards work which is positively viewed by employers.
- *Symbolic*
  - Youth activism around DACA, the DREAM Act and comprehensive immigration reform, and their continuous push to become recognized as full Americans who belong here is shaping the story of Latinos in the US. The 'Drop the i-word' campaign pressured public figures and media outlets to stop using the word 'illegal' when referring to undocumented migrants. The process of publically 'coming out' is making a strong statement that undocumented and DACAmented youth are here to stay and they are unafraid.
  - Documented immigrant youth may participate in these advocacy movements or find other ways to prove themselves. Participants strongly promote the idea of showing others what they are capable and, when the opportunity is presented, they take on 'new' positions, not only to enhance their own career prospects but also to embody what Hispanics can do and break down preconceived notions. By doing so, success stories symbolize a wider movement of hope and full integration.

Hispanic 1.5-generation immigrant youth in Charlotte experience some of the "second generation advantage" with respect to their bilingualism, biculturalism, "hidden"

human capital, and by being children of a “select population” (Kasinitz et al, 2008). Like Kasinitz and colleagues, who studied diverse second generation immigrants in New York City, I found that, to some extent, “the children of immigrants today seem remarkably at ease about living between different worlds. They rarely see their parents’ foreignness as posing a serious problem” (p.344). However, being in a less diverse environment and an emerging immigrant gateway city (Singer, 2015), means youth and their families are not always well received. Many youth also described instances of negative stereotyping and prejudice in social and/or professional situations based on their ethnicity (and country of origin). This affects Hispanics regardless of their immigration status and can make them feel unwelcome in certain settings or “White spaces.” Perpetrators may not always be fully aware of their biases and the implications. However, participants also see being Hispanic working to their advantage; for instance, they may be hired to add diversity to the company (this is positive as long as ‘tokenism’ is avoided).

As mentioned in the literature review, the labor market is a broad conglomeration of processes and structures, including: (un)employment and income levels; the hiring process; knowledge about jobs; physically access to jobs; and equal promotion opportunities. Participants of this study commented on these various components. Unemployment levels may be low but job stability may be low as well, particularly for undocumented workers. The hiring process may be biased in terms of who the company wants to hire and what their preconceived notions are of people with Latino names, accents, and faces. At the same time, there is an increasing demand for bilingual employees, potentially providing access for immigrant and Latino youth in more ‘mainstream’ spaces and sometimes also a higher pay. In order to move beyond entry-

level jobs, however, a higher education is required.

Participants are gaining work experience in a variety of fields and many have a sense of optimism about their future employment. This is a sign of resilience (Foxen, 2015). The majority possess a social security number, which significantly improves workforce inclusion relative to their undocumented peers. Participants also explain how they leverage their bilingualism and biculturalism to secure work. Their personalities and character traits – molded by their experiences as immigrants – make them desirable hires. Family members provide support and act as a motivation for youth to aim high and achieve their dreams.

Though there are plenty of examples of youth being able to leverage their bilingualism in order to obtain work, or positive and negative work experiences that are unrelated to documentation status and ethnicity, the influence of these factors on labor market access and experience cannot be denied. Even in cases where differential treatment is ‘random’, the fact that it becomes perceived as discrimination points to the lived experiences of minorities and immigrants. Privilege entails not having to worry if your skin color, accent, or documentation status played a role in your hiring or firing. As demonstrated so far in this dissertation, the experience of 1.5-generation Hispanic immigrant youth transitioning into the labor market is shaped by immigration status, ethnicity, social networks, information access, and socio-economic status – and not only in ways that these factors influence call back rates, interview and application experiences, and job-related knowledge, but also how they impact broader day-to-day experiences, self-perception, identity, and opportunities. Qualitative and participatory methods allow for a holistic portrayal of labor market access and its comprehensive, multi-scalar



influences.

In short, socio-spatial inclusion and exclusion work simultaneously to shape the work experiences of 1.5-generation Hispanic immigrant youth. The various social and spatial processes reinforce one another by compounding multiple dimensions of exclusion – thereby making it harder to overcome barriers to job access – but they can also cancel each other out. The spatial informs the social, and vice versa; they have a dialectic relationship (Harvey, 1973; Lefebvre, 1976, 1991; Soja, 1980, 1985, 1996). Multi-dimensional, multi-generational deprivation occurs when the spatial configuration and interrelationships of different aspects of deprivation (related to transportation, health, housing, household composition, social status, and employment) overlap (Pacione, 2003; Wilson, 1985, 2012). Nevertheless, youth are not passive subjects in the face of challenges. Study participants demonstrated how they employ socio-spatial strategies to navigate and improve their labor market opportunities, leveraging their assets and strengths.

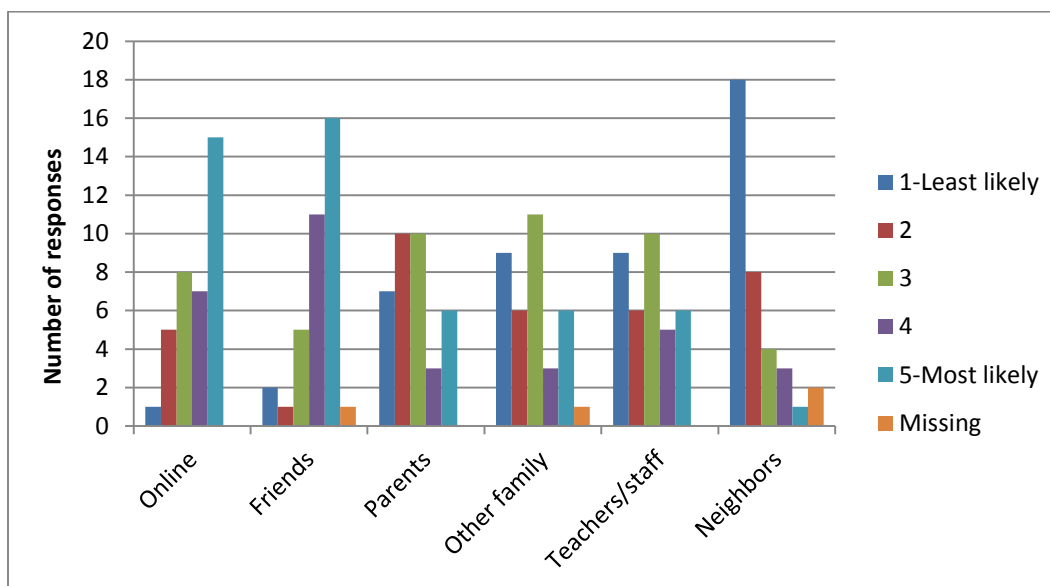
## 6.2 Socio-spatial Strategies used by Youth to Improve Job Opportunities

Given that the factors influencing Hispanic immigrant youth job access are social and spatial in nature, so too are the strategies youth employ to navigate their labor market opportunities. The balance of this chapter provides an overview of these (re)actions, as gathered from the questionnaires, journals, interviews, and field notes. It also responds to research question a) What socio-spatial strategies do Hispanic youth use to access and navigate the labor market? Strategies come in the form of proactive actions that youth take because they know or they have heard they should pursue a job that way, as well as reactive responses to barriers they encounter. Both acknowledge youth as agents in the

process of transitioning into the labor market, in the context of structures that are both hampering and helping.

Tactics employed by youth to navigate the labor market includes finding jobs via friends, family, and the internet; leveraging resources and connections; advertising their bilingualism; working close to home; engaging in activism; pursuing higher education; surrounding one-self by like-minded people; and code-switching. These strategies are elaborated on in this section.

Figure 33 provides an overview of how participants go about searching for employment. They are most likely to ask friends and least likely to ask a neighbor. This is in line with Ioannides and Loury's (2004) literature review finding that there is widespread use of friends, relatives, and acquaintances to search for jobs, particularly among Hispanics and people in cities.



1. Friend 2. Online 3. Parent  
4. Relative 5. Teacher 6. Neighbor

Figure 33: Where/how participants are most likely to search for jobs

Kasinitz, et al. (2004) found that second generation migrants entering the labor force are likely to find current job through friends, more likely than US-born Whites. Though the categorical options are not identical, national-level data also suggests youth (particularly non-White youth) are likely to contact friends and relatives (including parents) to encounter a job (Table 8). The data is outdated (1997), hence an under-representation of online searching, but it may still have value. For instance, it leads us to believe there are some gender and racial differences in how youth search for jobs, but that the greatest distinctions are among those of different socioeconomic backgrounds.

Table 8: Methods of finding jobs for youth in the US

Strategy	All Youth	White	Non-White	Female	Male	Lowest income quartile	Second income quartile	Third income quartile	Highest income quartile
Contact employer directly	0.41	0.422	0.402	0.405	0.416	0.422	0.368	0.377	0.537
Contact friends/relatives	0.39	0.374	0.402	0.359	0.42	0.349	0.385	0.39	0.299
View ads/Passive job search	0.283	0.34	0.241	0.307	0.26	0.271	0.316	0.283	0.291
Answer job ads	0.098	0.114	0.086	0.098	0.099	0.084	0.098	0.113	0.119
Contact school/university	0.08	0.061	0.094	0.093	0.067	0.09	0.103	0.05	0.06
Contact public agency	0.067	0.05	0.08	0.084	0.051	0.09	0.063	0.057	0.052
Contact private agency	0.016	0.019	0.014	0.014	0.018	0.03	0.006	0.019	0.022
Contact professional organizations	0.003	0.003	0.004	0.002	0.005	0.012	0	0	0

Note: All numbers are reported as proportions. N = 875. Source: U.S. Department of Labor, National Longitudinal Study of Youth 1997. Also featured in separate tables in Besen-Cassino (2015).

It is anticipated that age would correlate with number of previous jobs (Table 9), because the 21-year-olds have had more time to gain work experience than the 16-year-olds. In terms of variations in strategies by age, older participants are more likely to ask teachers and consider moving for work, whereas younger participants are more likely to ask parents and relatives. This could confirm the earlier statement that immigrant youth use their familial networks to access their first job in more Hispanic immigrant-concentrated sectors and subsequently tapping into educational and institutional connections they establish in order to gain access to the ‘mainstream’ labor market. Gender had no statistically significant correlations with any of the other variables.

Table 9: Pearson's correlations between demographic and job-seeking variables

Variable	Age	Zip code	Years in US	Years in CLT	No Previous Jobs	Search jobs online	Ask Friends	Ask Parents	Ask Relatives	Ask Teachers	Move for Work
Age	1	0.263	0.219	0.119	.646**	0.219	0.09	-.489**	-.500**	.514**	.449**
Zip code	0.263	1	0.15	0.261	0.076	0.031	-0.213	-0.268	-.376*	0.154	0.034
Years in US	0.219	0.15	1	.587**	0.125	0.116	-0.107	-.438**	-.366*	0.002	0.058
Years in CLT	0.119	0.261	.587**	1	-0.08	0.079	-0.246	-0.252	-0.319	0.101	-0.188
No Previous Jobs	.646**	0.076	0.125	-0.08	1	0.03	-0.127	-.499**	-.450*	0.184	.550**
Search jobs online	0.219	0.031	0.116	0.079	0.03	1	.397*	-0.186	-0.044	0.027	0.06
Ask Friends	0.09	-0.213	-0.107	-0.246	-0.127	.397*	1	0.168	0.313	0.181	-0.081
Ask Parents	.489**	-0.268	-.438**	-0.252	-.499**	-0.186	0.168	1	.651**	0	-0.158
Ask Relatives	.500**	-.376*	-.366*	-0.319	-.450*	-0.044	0.313	.651**	1	0.042	-.452**
Ask Teachers	.514**	0.154	0.002	0.101	0.184	0.027	0.181	0	0.042	1	0.199
Would move for work	.449**	0.034	0.058	-0.188	.550**	0.06	-0.081	-0.158	-.452**	0.199	1
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).											
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).											

### 6.2.1 Finding Jobs via Friends, Family, and the Internet

In the questionnaire, participants claimed most likely to ask friends for jobs or look online (Figure 33). Undeniably, the internet has increasingly become a main ‘place’ to locate employment and fill out applications, particularly for younger generations.

Internet job search (IJS) in the US increased from 24% to 74% among young, unemployed workers between 1998-2000 and 2008-2009. 2008-2009 data showed that IJS reduced unemployment time by 25%. It was most effective in reducing unemployment durations when used to contact friends and relatives, to send out resumes, fill out applications, and to look at job advertisements (Kuhn and Mansour, 2001). Kuhn and Skuterud (2000) found that Black and Hispanic unemployed and employed jobseekers were more likely to use the internet than Whites. The gender gap was small. Puckett and Hargittai (2012) surveyed 1,060 college students in 2007. All students were most likely to ask friends about job and career information, followed by family, though

English-speaking Hispanics were most likely out of the other racial/ethnic groups to ask family – which came up in my study in the form of many participants reporting having secured work via their parents. The internet was the third-most common source of job and career information, though rates varied from 56% for non-Hispanic Whites to 83% for non-Hispanic Blacks (69% for Hispanics). Though the authors are hesitant to pin down causal factors for these differences, they concluded that “the Internet plays a unique role among those who have been historically disenfranchised in the labor market by racial/ethnic and language background” (p. 100). My data would suggest youth use the internet because it provides access to jobs that family and friends may not have access to, but the extent to which this is the case, and whether IJS results in improved labor market opportunities for Hispanic youth, would require further investigation.

Participants described filling out online applications, especially for chain companies. If they went into the store to apply, they were likely to be referred to the online application. Occasionally, they received a call but more frequently there was no confirmation whether they were being considered for the job or not. For instance, one participant described meeting a Subway manager:

- “...it was my second time going in there. I had already applied. He said he was going to call me back a couple of days later but he never did. And I re-applied and he basically hired other people before me but he never called me back” (D4, M, 16, DACA).

With an abundance of applications for most positions, regardless of the level or industry, this lack of response has become a frequent practice. A 2012 nation-wide study of more than 3,900 U.S. workers found that 75% of workers who applied to jobs using various

resources in the last year never heard back from the employer (Career Builder, 2013).

Racial biases in hiring are well-established; for example, one study found that resumes with White-sounding names received 30% more callbacks than for African American-sounding names (Bertrand and Mullainathan, 2003). These studies would suggest that, while callbacks are low across the board, they are likely to be even lower for people with “non-White-sounding” names. Results were consistent across industries and occupations.

Still, many participants attained jobs easily and faced few if any difficulties - for instance, in this case where a 16-year-old participant with DACA applied to work at McDonalds:

Participant: “The application process was really easy. I turned in my application the first day and I got a call back the next day so it wasn’t anything difficult.”

Interviewer: “And they called you in for an interview or was there a phone interview?”

Participant: “It wasn’t even an interview. It was just like: you’re hired.”

Interviewer: “How come they were so eager to hire you? Do you think there was something particular about you and your application?”

Participant: “I mean, I also did it with a friend and he also got hired. He’s White and it wasn’t really anything special about it” (W23, M, 16, DACA).

Even though the application process would probably be different at a professional-level job, it was still easy for this 16-year-old with no work experience to obtain this job.

Many participants describe successfully encountering work via their friends (word-of-mouth, social media):

- "My friend recommend me and he told me how it was and how to act and everything" (E5, F, 20, undoc).

- "On campus as well, my peer Latino students, I'm just recently starting to connect with them and they help a lot with their having more experience than me. We just share resources and knowledge of navigating the college system. (...) I actually just got a scholarship thanks to those connections. I would not have applied had I not known those students" (G7, F, 21, PR).
- "...they really needed people at that moment and since they knew my boyfriend, because my boyfriend had worked there, he kind of gave me the recommendation so then they pretty much hired me on the spot. And then for the retail store job, there was also an application and I also got referenced from one of my friends who, he was friends with one of the managers there" (N14, F, 21, DACA).

This form of networking seems both an advantage and a disadvantage. It appears to be advantageous to gain access into the labor market in sectors where friends are already working, but if those friends are also young, disadvantaged, working in lower-wage jobs, and do not have a higher education degree, then this improved access through friends is narrow.

Interestingly, parents and other family scored fairly low in the questionnaire, but many respondents shared that they encountered jobs via family. This disconnect may be because youth did not see their family members as beneficial to their (long-term) labor market opportunities, even though they can help them attain (certain) jobs.

- "My dad is basically the one who got me in [on my construction job], because that's what he works in. I'm working under his name" (B2, M, 17, DACA).
- "...my first job I started when I was 12, 13, just helping him [my dad], not getting paid, but now I know how to run the business, so if there is any chance that there



might be two events on the same day, he'll take one event and I'll take the other one and we'll run it. He's trained me well. (...) she [my mom] knows a lot of people, she has a lot of connections, and that's how I get my connections" (C29, F, 17, PR).

- "All of my jobs in my hometown, before coming to college were connections through family or friends" (G7, F, 21, PR).
- "...through my dad and my uncle, if all else fails, I think I have a secure job, working in construction" (S19, M, 18, DACA).

In the last quote, the phrase “if all else fails” suggests that familial ties may not assist in accessing participants’ dreams jobs, but they do provide almost certain access to employment in predominantly “ethnic economies.” Access to such jobs is taken advantage of (or expected by family members) at the early stage of youth entering the labor market. Over time, the expectation is typically to transition into the mainstream labor market,<sup>33</sup> though for youth without a college degree, remaining in niche markets may become increasingly probable. As such, it seems unlikely that many 1.5-generation Hispanic immigrant youth are unemployed or end up unemployed for extended periods of time later in life. There are, however, significant barriers to moving beyond lower-wage labor and if we do not act, they are likely to get “trapped in the working class” (Terriquez, 2014).

Neighbors scored lowest in the ranking of how job look for jobs (Figure 33). In the interviews, there was also no mention of neighbors assisting in the job application

---

<sup>33</sup> That said, we should not assume that is preferred by all youth or that there is anything wrong with working in “ethnic niches.” Some youth may be happy with this option, whereas others strive for something different.

process. This reflects the way our modern-day networks are socially and spatially set up; transportation, technologies, and suburban living has decreased the sense of ‘neighborhood’ in many areas of the city. Communities and social structures are not defined by geography but rather by interests and other connectors. This holds true for most people. From a positive perspective, we have decreased our dependency on our immediate neighbors and broadened our social and professional circles. From a more negative viewpoint, not knowing the people in our immediate living area can reduce trust, increase crime, and decrease a sense of connectedness and community. For immigrants in particular, the absence of the ethnic enclaves and traditional settlement patterns, making way for a more dispersed pattern of settlement in the suburbs, has made it more challenging to provide resources and services to this population. Mistrust and fear towards others are particularly high among undocumented Latinos because others may ‘out’ them or take advantage of them.

The role of houses of worship and religion in immigrant settlement experiences is well-researched. For many first-generation immigrants, the church is not only a source of religious support, but also has additional roles. For instance, “an immigrant church or temple often provided ethnic communities with refuge from the hostility and discrimination from the broader society as well as opportunities for economic mobility and social recognition” (Hirshman, 2004, p.1206). Churches can also be spaces where bonding social capital is generated and social services are provided (Ley, 2006). Another article documented how Guatemalans in Houston, Texas, use the church for guidance in preparation for and during their migration. Once in the United States, the church is often the first organizational structure most migrants encounter and helps set up housing and a

job (Hagan and Ebaugh, 2003). In my health care access research with first-generation Hispanics in Charlotte, people also often bring up their church as a safe haven, and one of the local churches provides a monthly free clinic for uninsured Latinos. Immigrants are more likely to be involved in church or religion compared to US-born Americans and, subsequently, “it appears likely that immigrant youth have higher rates of church involvement than native-born American youth” (Stepick and Stepick, 2002, p.250) and one study on Korean-American 1.5-generation adolescents found that 4 out of 13 cases has close friendships with Korean church friends, which provided them with social support (Yeh et al, 2005). In my study, however, churches and religion are only mentioned once and only in reference to first-generation Latinos: "I know a lot of people in the workforce, people in churches. Most of my employees, believe it or not, come from churches. That’s usually where I get all workers from. If I need a worker I just go to the Priest or Pastor" (F6, F, 19, TPS). This may have to do with their age; younger people’s and Millennials’ networks revolve less around religious institutions than adult’s (Masci, 2016). Youth may still attend church with their parents, but it does not seem to hold the same multi-purposes as it does for their parents. Rather, immigrant youth’s social circle and supports mainly revolve around school, their work place, and community or interest-based organizations. This may also be because youth start taking on more “American” identities in which church-going is less common, even in the Bible Belt.

In a community-based participatory research (CBPR) case study on risk and resilience, Shetgiri and colleagues (2009) conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews with Latino youth (N=20), their parents (N=10) and community-based organization (CBO) representatives (N=8) in a low-income, urban housing complex. Members of the

housing complex's Resident Management Council and local CBOs, in addition to the academic team, were involved in all steps of the research process, including the development of the research question, the interview guide, and analysis. One noteworthy finding is that youth (12-17 years) participants identified self, family, and community factors as potential sources of support. In addition, parents "de-emphasize community resources, expressing that success resulted primarily from a child's individual desire, bolstered by family support. All stakeholder groups perceived peers more as potential barriers to achieving success than as potential sources of support" (p. 217). Results of this study also emphasize family support, and participants expressed that the environment they place themselves in outside of the home, and the friends they have, affect their motivation and trajectories.

#### 6.2.2 Seeking, Leveraging Institutional Resources and Connections

Most commonly, and this was not fully represented in the survey options (Figure 33), participants described how non-familial adults around them assisted with the job search and accessing associated resources. Many of these supports are located within the educational institutions youth attend, from teachers to resource centers to student organizations. For example, high school students mentioned that:

- "Most of my teachers that I've gotten close with, basically, they have helped me a lot in different ways" (B2, M, 17, DACA).
- "My ROTC instructors have been very supportive of me. Even though they are aware of my status, they have seen my potential and right now I'm squadron commander so I've always had teachers that haven't given up on me. Like when I had problems, they were there" (C3, F, 17, DACA).

Support structures were the highest and most readily available for youth attending a four-year college, compared to high schools and two-year colleges.

- "...the Multicultural Resource Center. Whenever I need a recommendation letter or just to talk to somebody, they're always there. They're a good support" (A1, M, 21, PR).
- "...the director of the career development center, she recommended me so that's a pretty good reference.(...) most of my internships have been through my professors" (F32, M, 21, DACA).
- "The school has a career center and they pointed out that the school has a lot of opportunities so I asked around there and I got two jobs" (J36, M, 21, DACA).
- "How I got the job, basically because of my involvement on campus. (...) connections are mostly with the people I have been able to meet. I don't think many of them have been through family or anything like that, just because, most of my family is . . . they were born in Peru. The kind of environment they're in or the kind of people they're around doesn't really side with what I want to do in life" (N14, F, 21, DACA).

Schools can provide a safe environment to build connections, take on new endeavors, and develop academic, social, and professional skillsets. This is another reason why, beyond obtaining a degree, keeping youth enrolled in school – particularly four-year colleges – is so important. Participants are taking advantages of the opportunities their schools offer and they are getting noticed for their efforts. The leadership capacity they advance in school will prepare them well for the labor force. However, this may not always be the case: Ruiz-de-Velasco and Fix (2000) noted that immigrant students are often overlooked

and underserved in US secondary schools.

Beyond educational institutions, youth who seek out interest-based organizations can establish helpful community connections. The impact of these involvements goes beyond obtaining employment and includes developing one's identity, human capital, and social capital.

- "I started coming to United 4 the Dream so that helped me a lot because I found people I could talk to instead of staying home and keeping it all to myself. (...) since elementary school I've had teachers who were really supportive and they really inspired me to go to school (...) I've gotten a lot of help from here [the LAC] and even with jobs, there's a job bank downstairs so I've gotten information from them, too" (E31, F, 19, DACA).
- "...where ever I go, there is support. If I have a question about something, either my counselor will answer it, my parents will answer it, a teacher will answer it. It doesn't matter who I go to" (G33, M, 16, DACA).
- "All the organizations I work with, I do have a lot of support with that. So if I ever have a question or have anything, I always know that I can call someone, find someone that can get me an answer" (Q17, M, 16, undoc).
- "...because of volunteer work and things I've gotten involved with, I guess I've made friends and made also, connections with people who would vouch for me. They wouldn't mind recommending me to someone else. And also because I feel they're not just support connections, but also connections that can help me" (A27, F, 16, U visa).

These quotes may not be reflective of all 1.5-generation immigrant youth but are reflective of the self-selected group that chose to participate in this study. That said, findings are consistent with Shetgiri, et al.'s study (2009, p. 217) which found that "Latino youth recognize the benefits of interacting with adults outside the family and are accepting of help from the community." Opposing perspectives were also captured, and many youth felt a lack of support and access to job-related information. That said, the repetition of similar comments provide insight into the following: a) there is some assistance available to youth; b) though some of this support is attained by luck or via family, most of it is because youth actively sought out support or demonstrated involvement, possibly in response to their at-times restricted familial networks; c) being connected to an institution or organization with adults who believe in you can have a tremendous impact in youth access to career-related information, confidence and motivation. These responses emphasize the importance of keeping youth in school and connecting them to interest-based organizations with opportunities for peer and adult support.

#### 6.2.3 Working while Undocumented: "Connections are Everything"

If undocumented, youth may seek out industries and companies that will pay in cash (may find through family members, friends, or Craigslist) or decide not to work because of the risk of getting 'caught.' Similarly, some undocumented youth and their parents may drive without a valid license because they cannot access one but they have to drive in order to fulfill necessary daily activities, such as go to work and get groceries. That said, undocumented persons will avoid driving when possible (which limits their

mobility to pursue what they want in life) and take measures to carpool, use public transit, get rides from others, or walk.

- "I looked on Craigslist. Pretty much online. Most Japanese and Chinese places don't really do the social security, like how they check. They usually don't ever check it. (...) I've tried to work in other places and apply for different places, but they always check and verify, the e-verify most of the time. I don't pass. (...) It was very low paying because of my immigration status" (E5, F, 20, undoc).
- "...to get a job, without documentation, your connections are all you have. You don't really have anyone to connect with and get a job, and then you're not going to be able to stay here" (J36, M, 21, DACA).

This points to several overarching challenges faced by the undocumented workforce in the US: a) despite possible credentials and degrees (from the US or abroad), work is limited to certain industries and jobs; b) stricter policies and anti-immigrant sentiments have made it more difficult for undocumented workers to secure full-time, consistent work; c) pay is likely to be low, i.e. under minimum wage; d) they are largely unprotected by labor laws and may consequently suffer from wage theft and substandard working conditions (e.g. Mehta et al, 2002; Magalhaes et al. 2010; Walter et al, 2004). When violations occur, they are less likely to report them for fear of being deported (Menjívar and Bejarano, 2004).

That undocumented youth look for work in places like immigrant-owned restaurants is in line with literature on ethnic economies in the sense that immigrants help each other out obtaining employment (e.g. Portes and Jensen, 1989; Light et al, 1994; Logan et al, 1994). The original conceptualization of the ethnic enclave economy that



specifies people within a single ethnic group, or of a certain nationality, assist one another in the labor market. The examples provided by youth in Charlotte suggest similar practices may extend to other immigrants beyond their ethnic group. Still, undocumented 1.5-generation immigrant youth are in a comparable labor market situation to undocumented first-generation immigrants, regardless of their bilingualism, biculturalism, and networks that extend beyond the immigrant community. Even a higher education degree, should they be able to obtain one while undocumented, does not hold enough value to negate the impact of not having a social security number. Most undocumented youth are therefore constrained to working low-wage, unstable jobs. Such jobs, most commonly in construction, restaurants, and the underground economy, are becoming increasingly scarce as a result of e-Verify.<sup>34</sup>

#### 6.2.4 Advertising/Mentioning Bilingualism

As covered in the previous chapter, youth advertise their bilingualism and biculturalism to set themselves apart from other candidates and show how they can contribute to the organization. One participant explained that: "I've never gotten called back on any job application. If I go in person and ask to speak to a manager, and then finding out that they needed bilinguals, that's why they gave me the job pretty fast" (G7, F, 21, PR). Rather than waiting to receive a call back, which may not arrive for whatever reason, this young woman took matters into her own hands. As previously noted, not receiving a callback is common for all applicants but marketing bilingualism is something only some

---

<sup>34</sup> "E-Verify is an Internet-based system that compares information from an employee's Form I-9, Employment Eligibility Verification, to data from U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Social Security Administration records to confirm employment eligibility" (USCIS, 2015: <http://www.uscis.gov/e-verify/what-e-verify>).

youth can do. By finding out if an employer was looking for bilingual workers, this participant could then market herself as bilingual, hereby setting herself apart from other applicants. This is a smart strategy considering companies are increasingly looking towards attracting Latino consumers based on Hispanic growth rates and increasing disposable income (e.g. Ueltschy and Krampf, 2011; Perman, 2006; Gomez, 2014; Nielsen, 2012).

"Young Hispanics do not want us to have a separate dialogue with them just because they are Hispanic. They want a broader conversation that acknowledges they are in the room and that speaks to their values," Lee said, CEO of Fusion, a joint venture between ABC and Univision (quoted in Gomez, 2014). In order to reach and communicate effectively with first, 1.5 and second-generation Latinos in the US, small and large companies can benefit from bilingual and bicultural workers.

#### 6.2.5 Working Close to Home, Carpooling, and Applying in Certain Areas

Transportation plays a central role in accessing services and resources, and lack of reliable transportation can jeopardize work options. That said, youth participants employ several spatial strategies to overcome their restricted mobility. Some have their own car, while others share a car with relatives. The main strategy is to seek employment close to home, or sometimes school, so that they can walk to work or, if dependent on a ride, the friend or family member driving, does not have to go far. Those who live close to a bus line may take the bus. For high school-aged youth, this is probably a common story. We cannot forget, though, that many of the participants' parents are undocumented, which means they cannot apply for a North Carolina driver's license. As such, the risks of driving are high and there is a lot at stake: "With 287(g) and stuff and me not having a license yet. My mom doesn't let me drive and if she drives and gets pulled over, she'd get

detained. So it's really hard for her to drive me to work" (H34, M, 19, DACA). In a place where other transportation options are limited, undocumented migrants may still drive in order to go to work and meet their basic needs, but they will carpool or avoid driving when possible. Youth with undocumented parents have a difficult decision to make: seeking desirable work in order to gain experience and earn money may involve relying on parents to drive them, thereby putting the family at risk. The alternative is to seek a job that is accessible by foot, bike, or bus – or to wait until they have their own driver's license.

As covered in Chapter 5, youth also describe seeking or avoiding employment in specific areas, based on place-based perceptions and thoughts about where they think they will be hired. In other words, employees as well as employers made place-based decisions and assumptions. This is poorly recognized in the broader literature. Participants expressed spatial preferences in their mental maps, journal entries and interview. For example:

- “South and North Charlotte would be my preferred locations to live and work (...) East and West Charlotte are some of the area which I personally would find most difficult to find jobs and live in. East Charlotte is an area with very high traffic and in my opinion not many jobs available for someone in their early 20s. West Charlotte on the other hand is very much a retire community. A lot of jobs are headed more towards elderly care and not many things are open after 11 and it is also a very religious side of town, with the most churches per square foot in the area” (R18, F, 21, DACA).

Such ideas may be based on (a combination of) personal experiences, stereotypes, data, and statements made by others (e.g. peers, family, media). Further research could look into how these place perceptions are shaped and how it influences job-seeking behaviors of different demographic groups.

Another way to look at these findings is that the physical environment – including the infrastructure, or lack thereof – and the political environment, which regulates who can access a driver's license, shape the context of youth's spatial mobility in relation to their labor market experiences. Of course, financial resources also play a role in whether or not someone can afford a car. Working close to home and carpooling are common strategies employed to respond to that experience and potential constraints.

Navigating transportation to and from work, among other places, emerges from the data as a common theme in youth's daily lives. Yet, not everyone faces significant barriers to their spatial mobility and transportation seems overshadowed by other variables that are more challenging for youth to overcome in the long-run. The additional risk of driving without a US license (the only current option for undocumented individuals in North Carolina) adds risk and fear that others do not face (Garlick, 2006). Restricting access to driver's licenses for undocumented migrants not only limits their mobility; it also increases the number of uninsured drivers on the road, thereby threatening the safety of all drivers. There is also an economic argument: Caceres and Jameson (2015) found that annual cost of auto insurance increased by an estimated \$17.22 (\$2009) across states that enacted restrictions for undocumented individuals accessing licenses.

### 6.2.6 Youth Activism

Several participants are involved with immigrant rights advocacy work. The use of social media and other technologies has drastically changed how ideas are communicated and advocacy is done, as movements such as the Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives Matter, and the Hong Kong student protests have proved. The Millennial generation in particular is taking the lead on this. Hashtags, such as #LATISM, #Not1More, #VotoLatino, #DefineAmerican, #SiSePuede, and their associated campaigns have catalyzed conversations about immigrant and Latino issues. Spaces of inclusion are created in online settings and immigration debates are playing out in digital spaces.

Hispanic immigrant youth activism also extends to offline spheres. Marches and rallies bring immigrant issues into the public view. Youth advocates confront and put pressure on politicians to make policy change. The original DACA legislation and the subsequent 2014 DACA and DAPA executive actions (which have yet to pass into law as of late 2015), as well as state-level implementation of the DREAM Act, had arguably not occurred without young Hispanics' activism. In turn, a byproduct of DACA is that undocumented youth are now more comfortable coming out of the shadows, speaking up for their rights, and entering spaces they were previously excluded from. Backlashes are felt at various scales across the country, but politicians and companies can no longer ignore the Latino vote, Latino workers, Latino consumption power and the overall growing presence of Latinos in the US.

Besides affecting social change, involvement in advocacy and other community-based organizations builds skills related to organization, communication, and leadership.

- "...being in Voces [Hispanic student organization] will help you understand other cultures and we help people become leaders, that's the whole point of the club. Being in the club will help you get connections, it will make you get involved with the community at East Meck and you can talk to other people and it can benefit you financially, education-wise, anything, just being in that club and actually participate in it and learn to be a leader" (X24, F, 16, citizen).

Building social relationships with other youth advocates can strengthen individual's ties to the movement. At the same time, stepping "out of the shadows" or becoming a public advocate for (undocumented) immigrants' rights may be discouraged because you are 'outing' your family.<sup>35</sup> This hesitancy also came up during the PAR project. The group decided to take less of an activist stance or mention documentation status on the website they created. Considering the current political climate, this is understandable. Participants even seemed uncomfortable with the word 'immigrant', possibly because of the negative social connotation it now unfortunately carries.

The scientific literature on Latino immigrant rights does not always recognize the central role youth advocacy has played and is playing in putting pressure on politicians and pushing immigrant youth issues into the mainstream media/eye. There is, however, some literature focusing on Hispanic youth activism. For instance, Gonzalez (2008) outlines how youth are both subjects and active participants in immigrant rights movement. Political organizing and advocacy has pushed for the DREAM Act, Deferred Action programs, immigration reform, stopping deportations/keeping families together,

---

<sup>35</sup> In the screening of *Forbidden: Undocumented and Queer in Rural America*, documentary protagonist Moises Serrano talked about this fear being heightened in rural areas and small towns where everyone knows each other.

and increased voting among Latinos. This is happening across the nation, encouraging political engagement from students and workers who had never been involved in such movements before. The movement has mobilized large numbers. Civic engagement is often positively correlated with socioeconomic status, and citizens are more likely to be involved than non-citizens. However, this movement defies that trend; it is very grassroots and involves students, low-wage workers, and non-citizens. As Gonzales (2011, p.235) mentioned: “Community activity at such a high level by a group of young adults expected to be waiting in the shadows runs contrary to conventional wisdom and much of the scholarly literature regarding youth participation” (p.235). The unique context of their situation – growing up in many ways the same as their citizen peers but facing extreme exclusion – reveals why, against traditional conceptions, this movement and youth participation is so strong. Youth activists may be undocumented, on a temporary visa, permanent residents, or citizens – or transition through statuses during their advocacy time. They organize for themselves, their peers, family members, their community members. It is highly personal.

Several of my participants are active with organizing such demonstrations, rallies, walks, vigils, and have experience lobbying in Raleigh and DC. They show up at events where politicians are speaking, making their voices heard to mayors, state senators, presidential candidates and the president himself. “The civil disobedience reflects how the undocumented youth movement has transitioned and transformed—from a movement that was initially focused on building support for the DREAM Act to one that has increasingly used direct action to bring attention to broader issues of immigrant, civil, and human rights as a strategy for social and policy change. The tactical shift has been in

response to a changing political context in which the will to pass immigration reform has waned in Washington, deportations are on the rise, and anti-immigrant ordinances and laws are being considered in an unprecedented number of localities and states” (Zimmerman, 2012, p.14). All of this – deportations, anti-immigrants laws, and immigrant advocacy to fight against such actions and in favor of legislation that benefits migrants – is ongoing and therefore advocacy remains needed.

Although we can point towards the successes of Hispanic youth advocacy movements and the leadership it has developed within young Hispanics across the US, including Charlotte, we must recognize that this advocacy emerged from a place of necessity, pain, and frustration. This was the sentiment expressed by Moises Serrano, an undocumented and gay immigrant and activist at the pre-cut screening of his documentary project *Forbidden: Undocumented and Queer in Rural America*<sup>36</sup> late 2015. When an audience member asked what motivated his activism, he replied that he felt he did not have a choice and that he must act because the costs of inaction and no chance were too high. The source driving this “youth empowerment” is ultimately negative and youth often engage in it because they feel like they have no choice, rather than something “fun” to do.

#### 6.2.7 Pursuing Higher Education

Despite the high costs of attending college, participants aspire to gain at least a Bachelor’s degree and several are already enrolled in a two- or four-year college. In a post-industrial economy, youth are told that a post-secondary degree is the only way to access a professional career. For lower-income and immigrant youth in particular, it is

---

<sup>36</sup> For further information, see: <http://www.forbiddendoc.com/>.



considered a ticket to upward mobility. The decision to pursue college is therefore a personal goal as well as an expectation set by society and family.

- "I did graduate from high school, but I do want to go to college, hopefully soon. I want to do something with nursing, and hopefully work in a hospital or something and make more money for my family" (E5, F, 20, undoc).
- "I tried to go to Business, because that's what I'm hoping later on I can open a business. That way, I can employ me and my family" (O15, F, 21, DACA).
- "They [other Latino youth I know in Charlotte] are all doing different things. But one thing I've seen in all of them is they want an education. People who are in my position, they want an education, but getting that is quite difficult, especially with money problems. I've seen some of them take their time to work to save up and I've seen other friends who are just like me, trying to get so many good grades so they can find scholarship opportunities" (P16, F, 18, DACA).
- "I really see myself going to college. At least trying. Even if it's not this grand prestigious college but going to somewhere like CPCC, getting my general degree, and trying to be out there, make something better of myself and show that you can do this, it's not that impossible. Just because everything's stacked against you doesn't mean that you need to stop there" (Q17, M, 16, undoc).

Once in college, there are ongoing struggles. Besides money, first-generation college students (nearly one-third of students entering two- or four-year colleges in the US) may face guilt, self-doubt, academic, social and cultural barriers (Banks-Santilli, 2015; Cardoza, 2016). There is also new-found support, e.g. from peers or college centers:

- "It's more empowering in college because, being one of many, we help each other, we don't feel like we're the only ones going through the struggle. Knowing that you're not alone in that, in the struggle, and that there's ways to get help for whatever you need, whether it's encouragement or support" (G7, F, 21, PR).
- "I thought I was going to go to university, I'm going to get a job, I'm going to move on with my life. I'm going to have a better life after I graduate. But it's different because the way things are right now, I don't know what I'm seeing. I'm just one of those people that I want to know before I take the other step ahead of me, but I realize with how I am right now, there's no way I could do that. I just have to wait and see, I guess. I don't know" (O15, F, 21, DACA).

These findings confirm how emphasizing ethnic group membership can translate into school success and positive college experiences (Barajas and Pierce, 2001). Barajas and Pierce (2001), however, did find a gender distinction: Young Latino men tended to have less positive racial/ethnic identities than their Latina peers. Their school success followed more along the lines of traditional assimilation theory that adapting meritocracy and individualism translates into success, whereas the Latinas in the study were able to maintain a positive sense of their bicultural identity without adapting to the dominant group environment. The young men also found mentors and motivation through athletic involvements in ways that the young women did not. I did not find these distinct gender differences in my study but I was also not looking into gender and school specifically.

My results reiterate that education is highly regarded within many immigrant families and youth are often expected to take advantage of educational opportunities their parents were not afforded (Suárez-Orozco, et al., 2009; Kao and Tienda, 2005). The

majority of immigrant parents expect their children to seek upward mobility and going to college (and beyond) is a central component of that journey (Glick and White, 2004; Ogbu, 1991; Zhou, 1997). When youth make educational and income-based progress, they are more likely to support their families financially than are their peers from US-born parents (Fuligni and Witkow; 2004). In the concept ‘the American Dream’, education is means to an end (Figure 34). Higher education therefore has symbolic as well as socio-cultural and financial purpose. It is a proactive strategy to gain access to professional careers and also a reactive response to witnessing their parents’ struggles and wanting to make their parents’ sacrifices worthwhile.

Gonzales (2008) suggests that there are two broad pathways for undocumented youth: a) higher education, which leads to the development of “positive identities and important skills that allow them to successfully negotiate college barriers and assert claims about broader societal and labor market participation,” and b) no college and finding their “day-to-day life to be saturated with legal limitations” until they “hit a dead end” (xiii). This would signify clear segmented assimilation based on educational attainment. Though suggests this to be the case, I think reality is more nuanced for undocumented youth because even those who make it to and through college face labor market restrictions and uncertainties.

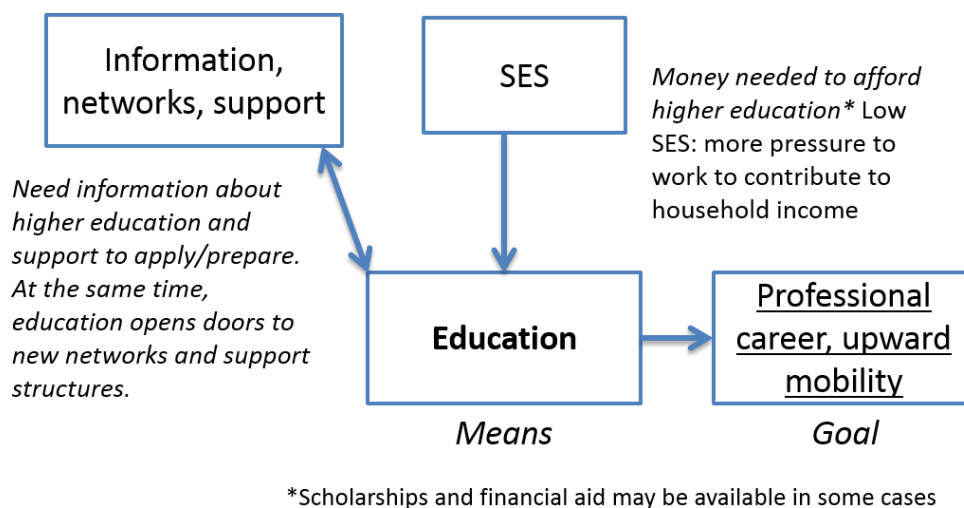


Figure 34: Education through the eyes of youth. Source: author

Again, paying for college is burdensome, even if youth work one or two jobs on the side. When asked: ‘What do you think will be the highest degree you will obtain?’, 20 out of the 36 participants answered ‘graduate degree,’ 14 said ‘college degree’ and 2 responded ‘high school degree’. Several mentioned that there is a discrepancy between what degrees they wish to obtain and what they think they could obtain based on the resources available to them. This is in line with research conducted by Perreira and colleagues (2008) of Latino immigrant youth ages 12-19 in North Carolina middle and high schools. 80% of the 283 participants were part of the 1.5-generation and 95% were not US citizens. As in my study, youth and their parents had high expectations for their educational attainment. 66% expected to obtain a 4-year degree or more, while 56% believed they could attain this aspiration.

Across the nation, the investment in college is being called into question. Many college graduates are not smoothly transitioning into the labor market and find themselves unable to repay their loans. Youth on temporary visas have the additional

worry that, even if they obtain a post-secondary degree, their immigration status may override their ability to work legally in the US, or take the final exam in order to become state or nationally certified in their field. This fact was not brought up much by youth themselves – potentially because there are more immediate challenges to consider. However, we must think ahead. Access to college and support to complete it is crucial for first-generation college students, but thinking about how students will repay their debts and whether or not undocumented and DACAmented students can work with their degree are also important questions of our time.

The contrary – not planning on attending post-secondary education – holds true for some youth as well, particularly undocumented youth. McWhirter and colleagues (2013) collected 475 questionnaires from 51 different high schools, asking youth about their perceived educational barriers, anticipated immigration status problems, and vocational outcomes expectations. Documentation status was not asked directly; it was assessed indirectly by asking the likelihood respondents would encounter problems with their immigration status. Findings demonstrated that “students who thought they might encounter problems with their immigration status anticipated more external barriers and were less optimistic about their future careers” (p.293). There were no gender differences.

Also, applying a typical cost-benefit analysis, “a student who is low income and undocumented may initially see the monetary costs of investing in a college education as enormous but may also expect that the benefits of receiving U.S. wages for doing college level work will far outweigh the immediate direct and opportunity costs of attending college” (Flores, 2010, p. 247). However, undocumented youth face other challenges, “including a lack of financial capital, insufficient command of English to do college-level

work, risk of deportation, separation from family in the United States, and uncertainty of receiving any real returns from or opportunity to legally enter the United States labor market after investing in college” (Flores, 2010, p.247), which means the short-term cost of college is too high and the long-term gains are too uncertain. Consequently, they elect to work rather than pursue secondary education. My respondents’ observations of their peers reflected these two sentiments and paths.

#### 6.2.8 Connecting Currently Learning to Future Careers

In the journals, youth were able to make clear connections between what they are learning in school and what they would like to do (or not do) in the future. Their ability to do this can help them develop a clearer path what career they wish to pursue. For instance:

- "Psychology has been a really interesting topic that I am considering maybe studying in college either as a major or minor (...) One of the topics that I am really interested in is the development of Alzheimer's in people...how to prevent or cure it (...) I like to learn about the governments of different countries and would like to work with the US foreign policy in the future” (A27, F, 16, U visa).
- “I got to speak on what nonprofits should do to engage youth...I also made them laugh. I believe I am getting good at public speaking. Maybe one day I can do that for a living.” (E31, F, 19, DACA).
- “I enjoy this environment because everyone looks forward to doing the same thing: playing soccer. This is something I want to keep doing in the future (even if it's soccer or not) because of the motivation and work ethics these environments create for me.” (J10, F, 16, PR).

Making such positive connections between school and careers later in life can enhance students' motivation (Husman and Lens, 1999). Setting future goals can be particularly useful in multi-cultural classrooms and for minority and immigrant groups below-average educational attainments (Solberg, et al., 2002; Phalet et al., 2004). American and European studies show "the future is both highly relevant and of prime importance for school achievement in general, and for the achievement of minority students in particular" (Phalet et al, 2004, p.61). In fact, "effective STW [school-to-work] transitions occur when youth match their personality traits and skills to occupational environments that use those traits and skills" (Solberg, et al., 2002, p. 709). Programming and counseling in schools can tap into this future-present orientation and empower youth with skills necessarily to translate their interests into vocational and life development (Solberg, et al., 2002; Husman and Lens, 1999).

#### 6.2.9 Surrounding Oneself with Positive, Like-minded People

Participants reflected on the ways in which your environment shapes you and how spending time with 'good' people – which they describe as peers who are focused on school and dedicated to family and their ambitions – will positively affect their educational and job prospects.

- "The other friend that didn't want to go to college, he changed her mind-set after hanging out with us. When you hang out with a certain group of people, you kind of change your mind-set to theirs" (M13, F, 16, DACA).
- "We have this close friend. He went to college in Spain and I think that's really cool. I guess that's motivated me to go to college and have an opportunity to travel abroad and study" (A28, F, 16, U visa).

Peer influence on youth behavior is well-documented. Adolescents are influenced by their peers in various risk behaviors, including substance use, violence, and other deviant behaviors (e.g. Thornberry and Krohn, 1997; Prinstein et al, 2001; Dodge et al, 2007). Removing these ‘negative’ influences and surrounding one-self with peers that are equally driven and share similar values can therefore help youth stay motivated and on the ‘right’ track. While this holds true for all adolescents, supportive and buffering factors may be particularly important for at-risk youth in encouraging them to continue to a path towards higher education and a professional career.

#### 6.2.10 Dealing with Discrimination and Stereotypes

Though I did not specifically ask about this in my interview, the trend that ethnic discrimination is not felt equally among all Latinos this did arise in conversation.

Individuals who are more “Hispanic looking” (i.e. a darker complexion and features that are more indigenous or African) typically face more discrimination than Hispanics who look more Caucasian.<sup>37</sup>

- “I have a friend that, he was born here but looks very Hispanic, he is Mexican, and it’s hard for him to find a job, especially when he goes and gets his interview. They see him and they see he is Hispanic, and they start assuming things and it makes it harder for him to get a job. So it’s a big deal” (D4, M, 16, DACA).
- "I've always been told: you don't look Colombian, you don't look Hispanic, you look like a White girl. So I've always been around that. And it's a good thing but

---

<sup>37</sup> It is worth noting that, though participants have a variety of skin colors and features, none identified as Black and Hispanic.



it's a bad thing, because you get tired of hearing 'you don't look Hispanic' because I am Hispanic" (C29, F, 17, PR).

Sadly, some youth may subsequently grow ashamed of their complexion and wish they were whiter:

- "I don't know at what age I thought this but I always thought that Caucasians are always better than everyone else, since they've been accepted more in society. And I just see them as higher in the pyramid as, for example, Hispanics or Asians or African American. I see that based on your skin color you get accepted more. (...) you feel when you're not wanted. (..) if I could choose, I wouldn't identify as Hispanic, I would like to be more as an American than as Hispanic. (...) If I had to choose from where, I would probably say Uruguay or Argentina because a lot of the people there are light-skinned and so, based on skin-color, if you are from those places, you're not dark and you look more White than you look Hispanic. So you would get accepted more. And, in general, if I could pick any place in the world where I would be, I would be an American citizen or probably from Europe" (D30, F, 17, DACA).

"Latinos/as, consciously or unwittingly, formulate their views on racial matters from the perspective of the white racial frame," Feagin and Cobas (2008, p.40) describe. This internalization of white supremacy is held by minorities as well as Caucasians. An interaction described by an interviewee illustrates this: "At first, when my husband and I first started dating, his dad was like 'why are you dating a Hispanic girl?' His dad always wanted him to marry a White girl or something." Interviewer: "He's White?" Participant: "No, he's Black" (E5, F, 20, undoc). She explained that her parents responded in the same

way; they idealized the idea of her bringing a blond-haired, blue-eyed boy home and had to adjust their expectations when they realized her boyfriend (now husband) is African American.

Critical race theory (CRT) provides a helpful framework to examine these statements. “CRT provides a powerful tool to understand how the subordination and marginalization of people of color is created and maintained in the United States,” Villenas and Deyhle (1999, p. 413) stated. CRT acknowledges how subtle forms of white supremacy seep into everyday life, ways of doing business, and our social interactions. In other words, it recognizes normalcy of white privilege. Race is considered a social construct (Bell, 1995; Delgado and Stefancic, 2012). While CRT originally focused primarily on the Black-White US racial binary, subsequent waves have added other minority groups and intersectionalities. LatCrit (Latino-critical), for example, is a subgroup, incorporating the experiences of Latinos/as in the US (Delgado and Stefancic, 2012; Solorzano and Yosso, 2001). Akom (2008, p. 257) explained that “A third-wave approach views race at the intersection of other forms of oppression such as class, gender, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, immigration status, surname, phenotype, accent, and special needs, by illustrating how these forms of oppression interlock creating a system of oppression (Collins 2000). Thus, informed by the intercentricity of racialized oppression third-wave studies challenge traditional claims toward objectivity, meritocracy, color blindness, and neutrality and illustrate that traditional research methods often mask self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups (Solorzano 1997).”

Within this framework, “passing as White” can be considered a way to – inadvertently or intentionally – evade discrimination. In *A Chosen Exile: A History of Racial Passing in American Life*, Hobbs (2014) provides a historical overview of African Americans living as White in the US up to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century. By ‘gaining’ Whiteness, they avoided slavery and intense discrimination. However, in order to do so, they had to completely change their lives, thereby losing family, culture and part of their identity. Thus, ‘transitioning to White’ or ‘becoming White’ brings gain, but also pain: “a person who desires personal and social advantage and acceptance within the white community so much that she is willing to repudiate her family, her past, her history, and her personal connections within the African- American community in order to get them is someone who is already in so much pain that it's just not possible to do something that you know is going to cause her any more” (Piper, 1992, p.14-15).

Scholars such as Piper (1992) have reflected on self-identifying as Black but able to ‘pass for White’ in contemporary America. She described how “[f]or most of my life I did not understand that I needed to identify my racial identity publicly and that if I did not I would be inevitably mistaken for white. I simply didn't think about it. But since I also made no special effort to hide my racial identity, I often experienced the shocked and/or hostile reactions of whites who discovered it after the fact” (p. 22). Moving beyond the Black-white binary, Latinos may also relate to this. As one participant revealed:

- "...because I'm so fair skinned, most of them don't realize it. Only because my name is different, that's when they're wondering 'where's her name from?' So I blend in pretty well. Yeah, that's about it. They depend on me a lot when they

have a lot of Spanish speaking customers. That's about the only time I'm different from the other employees. (...) My skin plays . . . it's a very confusing role because at times I'm White and at times I'm Latina. Depending on which part of me somebody knows first, the second one usually changes the treatment towards me" (G7, F, 21, PR).

Discrepancies between internal and external racial/ethnic self-identification can be challenging for people to navigate. As Piper (1992, p. 24) shared: "A benefit and a disadvantage of looking white is that most people treat you as though you were white."

"Passing as White" also translates into behaviors youth may adapt. For example:

- "I have noticed the more you act "white" the closer bonds you have with white people. The more traditional the less American white people. White 'American' people are not interested in your traditions" (I9, M, 16, PR).
- "...a classmate of mine, she's Peruvian, but she doesn't look Peruvian because she's White, she's pale (...) she goes out to party with the White children, so in order for her to get into that social class, she had to work for it, she had to buy the stuff that those kids wore and she had to act a certain way. Because I remember when I met her in ninth grade, she was a normal kid in the Hispanic group, but now in 12th grade she changed the way she talks, the way she acts, and then the money she spends so she can fit in there" (D30, F, 17, DACA).

Again, the concept of "acting White" was first discussed in the context of Black Americans. Forham and Ogbu (1986, p.4) listed that, "[a]mong the behaviors which Black students identify as "acting white" are: (1) speaking standard English; (2) listening to white music and white radio stations; (3) going to the opera or ballet; (4) spending a lot

of time in the library studying; (5) working hard to get good grades in school; (6) getting good grades in school, i.e., being known as a "brainiac"; (7) going to the Smithsonian; (8) going to a Rolling Stones concert at the Capital Center; (9) doing volunteer work; (10) going camping, hiking, or mountain climbing; (11) having cocktails or a cocktail party; (12) going to symphony orchestra concerts; (13) having a party with no music; (14) listening to classical music; (15) being on time; (16) reading and writing poetry; and (17) putting on "airs", etc.”

My research shows how similar experiences hold true for Latino students today. Even though studies demonstrate that high self-esteem and achievement go in conjunction with positive regards for one's racial/ethnic identity (e.g. Spencer et al, 2001), the pressure to act like the dominant group remains present. This is not to say that all people of color desire to be(come) White, socially or physically, but rather that behaving or looking like the dominant group can result in greater acceptance from that group, and youth are astutely aware of this. Simultaneously, this can lead to alienation by the individual's own racial/ethnic group (peer group rejection). Scholars have referred to this as the “burden of ‘acting White’” (Forham and Ogbu, 1986).

Around the world, white hegemonic discourse from colonial times are still present today and lighter-skinned people often receive preferred treatment compared to darker-skinned individuals. People cannot change the skin in which they were born; however, there are certain steps people may take to appear lighter if they so wish. These include face lightening lotions, make-up, and avoiding the sun. The term ‘acting White’ is also used to describe ways of talking and doing things that are associated with non-Hispanic

White<sup>38</sup> people, still the dominant racial group in the US. Though this term and what it entails is problematic because of the assumption that people have to ‘act their race’ in order to fit into their racial categorization, consciously or subconsciously adapting mainstream White preferences, habits, and accents can facilitate access into the mainstream labor market and ‘White spaces’ for people of color. It is inherently problematic that one would have to adjust themselves in such a way in order to be accepted, but this happens in various other, non-racial ways in society as well. In the immigration literature, assimilation theory suggests that the more immigrants act like the White majority, the more assimilated they become into US society, and therefore they experience better outcomes (in terms of income, education, health, etc.). Though this has been repeatedly challenged, my participants illustrate how those raised in a bicultural environment often struggle to navigate bicultural identities.

“Passing” is not solely an academic concept; it has also gained public traction. The internet is filled with stories from everyday people passing for White, straight, able-bodied or another identity that they do not necessarily associate with are emerging, particularly online. It is not necessarily a choice and not necessarily (only) a privilege, but also a burden or something additional to navigate. For example, someone who can pass as White but identifies as Hispanic/Latino/a may be ‘rejected’ by fellow Hispanics as well as non-Hispanic Whites once they become aware of the individual’s ‘real’ ethnicity.

---

<sup>38</sup> The construction of Hispanic as an ethnicity and not a race (and therefore Hispanics are often considered White) is another point of confusion among many Latin Americans coming to the US and a point of contention in current race/ethnicity categorizations, not to mention the difficulties it brings for Hispanic Blacks and for other Black people who will never be considered ‘White.’

Latinos have a wide variety of skin tones and racial identifications. A study by Ramos, Jaccard, and Guilamo-Ramos (2003) investigated how ethnicity and dual ethnicity influences depressive symptoms for adolescents grades 7-12. The four compare groups were European Americans, African Americans, Latinos, and Afro-Latinos. Results indicated that skin color and gender matter, both separately and the way they intersect. “Across all ethnic groups, adolescent females tended to show higher levels of depressive symptoms than adolescent males” (p. 147). Among young women, Afro-Latino females exhibited the highest levels of depressive symptoms, potentially because they are double minorities (Black and Latina) and ‘doubly disadvantaged’ in terms of race and gender. Besides gender, being foreign-born or US-born may affect how skin color affects Latinos’ psychological well-being. In a study comparing US-born and foreign-born Latina college students, Telzer and Vazquez Garcia (2009, p. 35) found that “[i]mmigrant participants with darker skin had poorer self-perceptions, including lower self-esteem, lower feelings of attractiveness, and a desire to change their skin color to be lighter. U.S.-born participants did not show any negative associations between skin color and self-perceptions” (p. 369). Developing a strong ethnic identity and racial socialization (preparing children for racial barriers, instilling racial pride and awareness) could protect Latinas from the negative self-perceptions associated with a darker skin.

The complex relationship people have with their skin color and how others respond to them based on their skin color translates into our identity formation and how we view ourselves (e.g. Chavez and Guido-DiBrito, 1999). “Skin is the place where boundary negotiations take place” (Benthien, 2002, p.ix). This manifests itself in space and across scales. For instance, “public space gets defined as ethnic or racilized subjects

reshape and occupy that space” (Pérez-Torres, 2006, p.36) and, in the organization of residential space, “race operates as a fundamental organizing principle of inequality and difference” (Omi and Winant, 2014, p.2). Also, as Root (1996) notes, multi-racial individuals may live in “racial borderlands” due to the spatial and other associations we have with race and the way multi-racial individuals point out the flaws of those assumptions. Considering that a strong, positive ethnic identity can act as a protecting factor in the face of discrimination (e.g. Brown, 2015), it is pivotal to expose and address the personal and structural biases people of color face. Racial/ethnic disparities in earnings and health across the lifespan are well-documented, with other variables held constant. Methods such as interviews, journals, and participatory art can reveal everyday qualitative experiences in work and hiring settings.

Code-switching can also be considered a strategy to adjust to the environment and avoid discrimination. Though participants do not tend to see culture as influencing job prospects much, they often provide examples of (subconscious) code-switching, which ties to culture and cultural ways of communicating. For instance, an interviewee explained how, when he meets a Hispanic adult, e.g. in a job interview or networking setting, he ‘feels out’ the situation and acts more or less ‘Latino’ according to the cues he receives from that individual:

- "You have to see what you're comfortable with. If they seem to have more of a Hispanic culture in them, then you show that side. If you see that they're more Americanized, then you show that side. And then you stick to it. And that's really all" (J36, M, 21, DACA).



We all adjust to our audience to a certain extent. It comes down to connecting or ‘clicking’ with someone, which, in the job application process, is often essential to your hire. If the employer and the team does not feel connected to an applicant, they are less likely to want to work with them, regardless of their other skills and accomplishments. This can put applicants with a different cultural background at a disadvantage. Code switching is a way to navigate that. Living in ‘two worlds’ for most of their lives, 1.5-generation Hispanic immigrant youth are often experts at this and this can work to their advantage – whether they recognize it or not. These “symbolic markers signify cultural identity that allows or denies workers to maneuver within the particular contexts of labor market segments” (Bauder, 2001, p.41).

Participants had various exposures with discrimination and ways to articulate and respond to it. One 17-year-old explained that: “I’m just bracing myself because I know there are some people who are against certain ethnicities or again something and I have to remain open and keep a smile on my face and move on” (C29, F, 17, PR). Negative ethnic and gender stereotypes can interfere with academic success (Phalet et al., 2004). Conversely, it can promote a desire to ‘prove society wrong’ by not living the (work-related) stereotypes people may expect of them, e.g.: “if I don’t go to school then I feel like I’m going to be another statistic and that’s something I don’t want to be” (E31, F, 19, DACA).

Another strategy youth employ to overcome, navigate or avoid exclusion is to create spaces of inclusion. These spaces may include Hispanic, country-specific, or familial gathering. Spaces of inclusion can also be created at schools and universities in the form of Latino/a student organizations, fraternities and sororities. Community-based

organizations may also have youth groups, e.g. United 4 the DREAM at the Latin American Coalition. Belonging does not always have to be around ethnicity and cultural identity, it can also be about other facets of youth identity, such as interests (sports, dance, music) or sexual orientation. My respondents provided soccer, tennis, and an LGBTQ youth organization as examples of strong community associations and places of social support.

### 6.3 Further Discussion and Reflection

Immigrant youth – and people in general – are not passive beings simply subjected to the actions of, and structures created by, politicians, policy makers, and employers, but they find ways to deal with their situations, and interact with and react to them. Consequently, despite being confronted with socio-spatial exclusionary practices, youth demonstrate how they navigate the labor market with the information and assets they have available, and they possess helpful insights into various ways we can improve their transition into the work force. Even without being directly confronted with exclusion, youth proactively take measures to improve their future and they do so in ways that powerfully illustrate the relationship between the social and the spatial.

Davidson and Henderson (2010) suggest a parallel between individuals on the autism spectrum and LGBT individuals in terms of the ways they may conceal or reveal this part of their identity, and I argue that undocumented migrants navigate their status in similar ways. Being undocumented is not a fixed status and undocumented individuals can find ways to ‘pass’ or ‘stay in the closet’ in social situations. Their fluidity of identity across space is common; among close and trusted others they are ‘out’, whilst in public or alone they may not reveal their status. The four sense-making discourse clusters, or

repertoires, Davidson and Henderson identify are also applicable to undocumented migrants: 1) A ‘keeping safe’ repertoire, which addresses protective strategies in disclosure and coming out. Here, a question might be: Should a child grow up knowing and talking about his/her status or not? 2) A ‘qualified deception’ repertoire, which relates to the complexities of non-disclosure. Individuals may ‘preprogram’ situations for different socio-spatial encounters to ‘pass’ as documented. Fluency in English (with an ‘American’ accent) helps with this. 3) A ‘like/as resistance’ repertoire, which captures the tendency of undocumented migrants to position their individual and collective experiences of the process of coming out or fighting for civil rights for other marginalized groups (e.g. African Americans, LGBTQ). 4) An ‘education’ repertoire, which contributes to the project of building a community to come out to and also educating others about immigration. As demonstrated in this chapter, a combination of all these strategies is being applied by undocumented or DACAmented youth in Charlotte. The maps and stories collected in this study therefore offer insight into the fluidity and spatiality of their status identity. Reasons for choosing a certain repertoire show us how youth may overcome or manage status-based obstacles.

According to King and Puntí's (2012) research, undocumented youth deal with the contradiction of wanting to fully participate in US society and work hard, but are confronted with educational and employment barriers because of their legal status and “constructed by the broader discourse as ‘illegal’” (p. 246). They deal with these tensions by working outside the mainstream labor market, planning to return to Mexico to study, living in the present and not planning for the future, and expressing aspirations for their

children rather than themselves. The youth participants in this study also navigated their status and job prospects in some but not all of these ways.

Factors contributing to labor market inclusion can be viewed as buffers and protecting factors from exclusion or downward assimilation. Brown (2015) outlined the following factors as protective in the face of ethnicity-based discrimination of immigrant children: a strong, positive ethnic identity; family support and socialization; and active coping and social support employed by the youth themselves. These factors return in this study as strategies youth use. The report also discussed how immigrant children tend to do better at more diverse schools and in school climates where teachers and staff make classroom diversity an opportunity rather than a burden. The development of a positive ethnic identity is influenced by the family but also depends more broadly on how multiculturalism and diversity is perceived, portrayed, and approached in our institutions, public policies, etc. Thus, creating truly inclusive spaces – including in the workplace – can protect people against the impacts of discrimination.

Findings illustrate how familial networks are influential in helping 1.5-generation Latino immigrant youth secure jobs. In light of the “hard-working Latino” generalization, employers may tap into familial and ethnicity-/country of origin-based networks in their hiring practices. For example:

- "I notice that at my job because recently they needed more people and they asked one of the cooks if there was someone he knew. He's like: I don't want to hire someone else, they don't work as well.(...) I find that interesting because that was the second time that did that, where they asked the cooks to look for someone instead of themselves looking for someone" (E31, F, 19, DACA).

Thanks to technology and transportation, immigrants can still maintain strong ethnicity-/country of origin-based networks across the Charlotte landscape means that, even without more dispersed, suburban settlements (heterolocalism).

Parallel to this, youth sometimes lament their limited access to professional and social networks outside their family. Being restricted from ‘mainstream’ networks is a common immigrant labor market experience, potentially leading to increased self-employment, co-ethnic hiring and bounded solidarity employees (Bonacich and Modell, 1980; Light, 1972, 1984; Light et al., 1994; Light and Bonacich, 1991; Portes and Jensen, 1989; Wilson and Portes, 1980). This is indeed occurring; many participants work in Latino- or family-owned businesses.

At the same time, participants demonstrate their abilities to gain social capital outside their familial networks. Their knowledge of English and how things are done in the US, and the motivation of not going through the same struggles as their parents help them cultivate these additional connections. This trend is nothing new; in fact, it is expected of the children of immigrants to make this transition. The 1.5-generation can form the bridge between ‘mainstream’ networks (broader, more wide-reaching but more difficult to access) and ‘immigrant’ networks (more narrow but stronger). Still, getting a strong foothold into these mainstream networks, especially once youth leave their educational institution, may remain challenging.

Scholars have pointed out the positive aspects of labor market segregation by race/ethnicity. The assumption is that spatial sorting occurs through self-selection to minimize conflict between social groups, improve group social and political voice, create a sense of mutual support, enhance social and professional networks, and preserve culture

(Knox & Pinch, 2006). There is little evidence in this study to support the argument that Latinos self-select in their labor market segregation. Though ethnicity- and country of origin-based social and professional networks play a large role in industries with many foreign-born Hispanics, and these connections can provide a sense of support, it is unlikely that labor market segregation would continue to this extent if Hispanic immigrant youth had a choice. Even if youth ages 16-21 work in predominantly high-Hispanic sectors as their first job, they often adjust their educational goals and socio-spatial strategies in order to transition out of these fields.

In response to multiple shut doors, youth may become demotivated, live day-by-day, or work extra hard to ‘overcompensate.’ One person may experience these three reactions at different times or to different degrees. Accordingly, youth may become more socially and spatially isolated if they feel they are unaccepted or defeated, or they make efforts to ‘push back’ through academic exceptionalism and activism. Limited opportunities for upward mobility perpetuate social inequalities and call U.S. meritocracy into question. Their daily experiences accumulate to distinct trajectories and disparities in job prospects and lifetime earnings.

The example of Latino immigrant youth is one of many instances across (Western) space and time that illustrates how differences in constructed and how people are systematically in-/excluded socially and spatially from society. At the same time, Sibley (1995) reminds us to pay attention to signs of resistance and examples where marginalized people are “carving out spaces of control” (p. 76). Latino youth are a perfect example of this. Their activism and continuous push to become recognized as full Americans who belong here is shaping the story of Latinos in the US.

## CHAPTER 7: OUTCOMES AND IMPLICATIONS OF POTENTIALLY DIVERGENT PATHWAYS

As outlined in the literature review, segmented assimilation theory is one of the main frameworks this study is founded on. This chapter assesses how results from my dissertation corroborate with or divergence from segmented assimilation theory. The chapter draws on aforementioned and new data regarding the experiences of Hispanic immigrant youth, the socio-spatial factors influencing their work access, and the socio-spatial strategies they employ to navigate the labor market. It also answers research question b) What are the outcomes and implications of potentially divergent pathways?

Segmented assimilation theory suggests that migrant children face divergent trajectories because their spatial and social contexts become reinforcing. Some children of immigrants experience consonant acculturation, whereas others face dissonant or selective acculturation (Table 10).

Table 10: Segmented assimilation model

<b>Trends</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Consonant acculturation or upward assimilation	"...children and the parents both gradually learn American culture and abandon their home language and culture at about the same pace. As children enter the mainstream, they not only achieve upward mobility, but they do so with the support of their parents. This path is most open to those who are most similar to, or most likely to be accepted by, the white majority (Kasinitz, et al, 2008, p.345-346).
Dissonant acculturation or downward assimilation	"...children learn English faster and accept American ways more readily than do their parents, who are more likely to cling to immigrant identities. (...) young people face racial discrimination, bifurcated labor markets, and an often nihilistic inner city subculture on their own, without strong parental authority and resources and with few community resources and supports" (Kasinitz, et al, 2008, p.346).
Selective acculturation or upward assimilation with biculturalism	Upward economic mobility in conjunction with continued attachment to home country culture (Kasinitz, et al, 2008). "...parents learn English and American customs at the same rate, where parents and children are inserted into the ethnic community" (Portes and Tumbaut, 2001, p.52).

### 7.1 Is Segmented Assimilation Occurring?

Participants seem to agree that Hispanic immigrant youth are following different paths:

- "I feel like it's going to be 50/50 because some kids think: what my parents are doing is fine, why do I have to be better than them? If they just got this far then maybe I just have to get this far. But other kids are like: I wanna be above and go to college and get a good job" (I35, M, 16, PR).
- "...most the students who come looking here for scholarships have pretty decent grades. I guess there's another population that didn't put in an effort in high school, because they didn't see opportunities" (F32, M, 21, DACA).



- "I think half our ethnicity is like: yeah, let's do it, let's be the first to do this. And then some are like: no, because society is bringing them down and they're believing what society believes" (X24, F, 16, citizen).

The participants themselves, and the people by whom they are surrounded, may be on the 'right track' to have a professional career but they also know and interact with peers or family members who are not:

- "...for my cousins here in America, I am the first one who hasn't fallen off the pathway" (F6, F, 19, TPS).
- "I mostly hear about Latino people dropping out of school" (K11, F, 16, PR).
- "Most of the people I've known from middle school, not high school, that's basically what they're doing now, they're barely getting by" (S19, M, 18, DACA).
- "I feel like some of the Latinos didn't know about the whole college opportunity so they would just give up and drop out. Because I'll be like: I can't do anything anyway. A lot of girls get pregnant and drop out of school" (U21, F, 20, DACA).

There is little sign of the behaviors associated with 'deviant downward assimilation (arrests, incarceration) – at least based on this study's participants and their stories (Haller et al, 2011). Other downward assimilation outcomes such as poverty, school abandonment, and early childbearing seem more common.

The most common split occurs after high school – though the process leading up to it starts much earlier. Some youth drop out of high school to work or work after high school instead of going to college. The intention may be to go back to school later (once money is saved), but this becomes harder once out of educational institutions that provide resources and information. College may not be for everyone but many immigrant youth

wish to avoid the types of jobs and lifestyles they see their parents leading and understand they will need some form of post-secondary education or certification to do that.

- "I had a lot of friends who dropped out and just started working because they would make a good amount of money with their dad who was self-employed or working in construction "(A1, M, 21, PR).
- "I see most of the noncitizen youth, either they work a lot because they just want...they don't want to go to college. They just want to work, work, work wherever it may be, but they just want to be . . . to have money, to be balanced, stably, economically stably. They just want that. The other part, then I see that they're working really hard in school, in our school to try to move on and get the dreams that they want and go to college, do the whole process so that they are successful later on. (...) I would say that there's maybe more people just working, just working, working, working probably 60/40" (B2, M, 17, DACA).
- "...most of them [friends from high school] have ended up working. Only a couple, a very small handful, that ended up attending a college or university" (N14, F, 21, DACA).

As Perreira, Harris and Lee (2007, p. 6) explain: "For immigrant youth, in particular, early work experience can complement investments in schooling and help to improve adult labor market opportunities," but "a careful balance between work and school investments must be sought." Youth responses from this study support existing research that immigrant youth feel obliged to support their parents financially (Tseng, 2004). There is additional pressure on immigrant youth to prove their parents' sacrifices were

not in vain. I also found that youth in lower-income households report “more pressure to earn income to support their families, pay for personal expenses, or save for college (Mortimer, 2003; Pabilonia, 2001; Rothstein, 2001)” and that “[a]dolescents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds may have a greater tendency to use work as a way to pay for incidental expenses rather than as a means for supplementing household incomes” (Perreira et al, 2007, p. 9).

When I asked participants “Should we be concerned for this 1.5-generation?,” their responses are generally positive but reflect a sense of hesitancy based on their own experiences and what they see around them:

- “...for me, I was lucky that I had the support to...and I didn’t have the challenges . . . my parents were able to afford to put me in a nice neighborhood and nice school. So even though I was only one, I was still able to progress on my own and take initiative. But, for others who come here and they want to seek higher education, but they can’t. They’re actually pressured to stay home with their parents and not seek higher education. I think they have those challenges culturally and economically. They’re usually very low class socioeconomically” (G7, F, 21, PR).
- "A lot of them are working right now just to keep saving up to attend [college]. I know some of them are still planning to attend school. The ones that are already in school, they I think, from the experience that they have been able to get, they’ve been able to get a lot of help and they’re also on the right track and graduating and hopefully getting a good job afterwards" (N14, F, 21, DACA).
- "I’m seeing more Latinos dropping out. (...) Steve Jobs dropped out and he became the founder of this great organization but to say that I drop out, that’s the

end for me. There's no going forward from there. (...) my documented counterpart can drop out and still make something out of his life, to say that he has the opportunity but if I drop out, that's it for me, there's no going back. That's very drastic and it's kind of traumatizing to a degree, to say that if I mess up, that's it" (Q17, M, 16, undoc).

Nevertheless, many participants maintain a positive view of the future of Hispanic youth in this country.

- "...there's not a lot of Hispanics in very high positions or if there are, there's just a few. I think we're kind of opening paths for the younger Hispanic students" (A1, M, 21, PR).
- "...it depends on if you are trying to work somewhere where they don't want to hire Hispanic people or Mexican people, which I don't really see that much now but that was a really big deal before. I feel that now people are more open to it, just because of the different factors like language" (E31, F, 19, DACA).

Using 1990 PUMS data of 25-35 year-olds in Arizona, California, Colorado, Illinois, Michigan, New Mexico and Texas, Allensworth (1997) conclude that, controlling for human capital, 1.5-generation Mexican immigrants earned about the same as U.S.-born Mexican Americans, but significantly more than first-generation Mexican immigrants. Such findings would suggest 1.5-generation Mexican immigrants are upwardly mobile. Such "upward mobility is associated with the use of English, employment outside of an ethnic enclave, and learning American ways faster than one's parents" (Kasinitz et al, 2008, p.347). Indeed, my data suggest youth are bilingual, bicultural, and they work in the "ethnic economy" as well as the mainstream economy.

Youth perspectives from my study, however, suggest that only some upward assimilation or consonant acculturation is occurring. Though I did not compare to US-born Latinos and non-Hispanic Whites, upward mobility for the 1.5-generation seems possible but restricted, especially for undocumented youth. The 1.5-generation may be in a better situation than their parents in terms of their ability to move up in society, but they face numerous challenges that their US-born (White) peers do not encounter or encounter to lesser degrees. There are clear distinctions in levels of integration between first-generation immigrants and their 1.5-generation children. This may come with new dilemmas; for instance, Feagin and Cobas (2008) found that Latinos that are more integrated into the middle-class and mainstream labor market feel greater pressure to give up their cultural heritage and language than working-class Latinos.

Some dissonant acculturation or downward assimilation is occurring, though I am not seeing this “inner city urban ghetto subculture” described by Portes and Rumbaut (2002). Rather, youth live in a diverse range of suburban residential settings, some more safe and resource-filled than others, but none of which are completely disconnected from (mainstream) work options. More commonly, there appears to be a stagnant rather than a downward path. Despite living in the US for a long time, being bilingual and bicultural, and US-educated, many Latino youth end up working with their parents in low-wage jobs. Obtaining a higher education degree can help move away from that, but financial and information barriers, such as knowing how to apply for college, stand in the way.

As for selective acculturation, findings suggest that youth are indeed bilingual and bicultural and that this can assist them in the work force. Children are not necessarily worse off when they do not match their children’s level of integration. Being ‘stuck’

between two worlds brings struggles but also benefits. For instance, participants shared how it has enhanced their open-mindedness, flexibility, and adaptability. They are also joining a society that is becoming increasingly racially/ethnically diverse and multicultural, which may diminish pressures to “pass as White” or fully “assimilate” to White Americans (though some of this pressure is certainly still alive, especially in settings with few racial/ethnic minorities). Hispanic student organizations and similar groups can help strengthen and build confidence in a bicultural identity, and harness the creative potential and contributions of a group of young people “growing up with a dual frame of reference” (Kasinitz et al, 2008, p.356).

Segmented assimilation theory has a spatial as well as a social context. However, the scalar influence of that context is unclear. According to my findings, neighborhood-level variables can influence youth experiences and labor market access but the broader city, regional, and national context should also be considered. While the residential environment shapes youth daily lives, it is not the neighborhood in and of itself that determines labor market access. Rather, access and youth labor market experiences are largely defined by other factors, such as ethnicity, documentation status, and personal and family motivations. 1.5-generation Hispanic immigrant youth live in a variety of neighborhoods, often lower-middle and middle-class areas with higher than County average percent Latinos but ethnically/racially mixed demographics. A strength of this dissertation, therefore, is that, unlike many other studies, it does not focus on the most disadvantaged or on the most exceptionally successful youth. Neighborhood of residence does influence which school youth attend, which, in turn, shapes how they view school and resources for college and career preparedness. While the limited influence of

neighborhood characteristics opposes ethnic enclave literature, it is in line with a quantitative study that found that “[a]lthough school networks were important to the labor-market participation of immigrant youth, the population characteristics of a neighborhood had no significant effect on the work participation of first- and second-generation youth” (Perreira et al, 2007, p.25).

My results confirm Portes and Zhou (1993)’s description of integration as an uneven, non-linear process. For instance, DACA has assisted in the integration of undocumented youth into the labor force but this will be significantly reduced if the program discontinues and enhanced with comprehensive immigration reform. Also, for Hispanic immigrant youth in general, regardless of their status, they may feel integrated or that they belong in certain spaces but not in others due to racial discrimination. Portes and Zhou recognized the influence of skin color in upward mobility, which potentially is a more accurate variable than ethnicity in defining youth experiences because there are many variations of skin color within the overarching ‘Hispanic’ category. Tying back to the aforementioned discussion about skin color and negotiating discrimination, ethnicity is something others “read” off you accurately or inaccurately based on your skin color and features.

Findings of this study confirm Gans’ (1992) observation that children of immigrants tend to reject ‘immigrant jobs’ because they have become ‘Americanized’ in their work and status expectations. That said, they do perform these jobs, confirming Waldinger, et al.’s (2007) analysis of occupational attainment among children of Mexican immigrants. As one participant shared:

- “I’ve tried to get away from that [construction] as quickly as I could. Because... again, going back to the Hispanic culture where you kind of have to help out in your family. It would have turned into something that’s really not a choice anymore. You have to do it. If you don’t get away from it, then you’re going to be stuck there. So I decided to look elsewhere and try to get jobs to integrate with to society here learn more about how they in Corporate America and how those things work” (J36, M, 21, DACA).

Employment in the sectors where many first-generation Latinos work, or “[e]nclave employment may well be preferable to unemployment, but it is a safety net, not a springboard” (Kasinitz et al, 2008, p.348). Though I would need more longitudinal data to support this claim, youth did mention they have more opportunities for career development and mentoring as an intern or an assistant at a bank, hospital, or university, than serving in a restaurant

The 1.5-generation immigrant youth in Charlotte also appear to be part of the ‘second generation revolt’ (Zhou 1997), which is described as the oppositional culture of children of immigrants who feel excluded from mainstream American society due to institutional discrimination and segregation. They also feel a strong sense of responsibility towards their parents. Social isolation and labor market exclusion are consequences, but so are more ‘positive’ responses such as youth activism, increased motivations to seek out opportunities, and leveraging skills like bilingualism. At the same time, as Alba, et al. (2011), among others, have highlighted, most Americans are affected by the polarizing labor market in which upward mobility for lower-income families is stunted and income disparities have increased. Thus, when we look at the positionality of



immigrant youth in the labor market, we must recognize these broader trends.

Nevertheless, opportunity structures remain different for those with parents who have lower educational attainment, do not speak much English, and/or grew up abroad. That is not to blame parents for limiting their children's stagnated mobility. On the contrary, these results show the kinds of support and motivation immigrant youth gain from their family and how this can benefit them in the labor market.

In sum, results fit partially into the segmented assimilation model, but not fully. I originally selected the model because that is how the incorporation of the children of immigrants has largely been framed in the broader literature. However, similarly to Kasinitz and colleagues (2008, p.345), I found that "[n]either the straight assimilation model nor the segmented assimilation alternative easily capture the complex ways in which groups have combined economic, political, and cultural incorporation." What my work does reveal, however, is that there are divergent pathways and these are both structured ones that people follow, and constructed ones that people create. This dissertation then corroborates existing literature that:

"...youth follow a diversity of pathways as they transition from school to work (Staff & Mortimer, 2003). These pathways are shaped by their family socioeconomic status (SES), school and neighborhood social networks, and labor market conditions (Mortimer, 2003; Newman, 1999). For immigrant youth, these pathways are also shaped by the context of their reception into the United States (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001), the presence of ethnic labor markets in American cities (Waters 1999a, 1999b), and the work orientations that drive their families' migrations to the United States (Massey, Durand, & Malone, 2002)" (Perreira et al, 2007, p.6).

Upon reflection, I realize that qualitative and participatory methods may not be the best way to measure segmented assimilation. A longitudinal, quantitative study would be more appropriate. The methods I used, however, did provide new insights into the

causal mechanisms that drive divergence in youth trajectories. The following section therefore explores these interacting factors. Through in-depth analyses into youth perceptions and experiences, I explore the factors determining successful labor market integration, such as support from parents and teachers, financial aid for college, job-preparedness skills, information about options and policies, and a social security number. Self-confidence and hope also play a role in motivating youth who are undocumented or struggling financially to maintain their career dreams.

## 7.2 Causal Mechanisms of Divergent Pathways

Participants' comments regarding the trajectories for some 1.5-generation Hispanic youth can help understand the processes at work. They highlight the interplay between structure, and personal agency and responsibility.

### 7.2.1 Not Everyone has the Same Opportunities (Structure)

Structural differences are a main attributor to divergent pathways, according to respondents. Policy and institutional barriers include immigration policy. As demonstrated, documentation status is a significant determinant of labor market in-/exclusion. That said, youth navigate the job market mostly in the same ways once they have a social security number, whether it is with a green card, DACA, a U visa, or TPS – at least in the short term. If undocumented, and without social security number, however, they fall into a different labor market pool that is limited to certain jobs and sectors - and highly dependent on local connections. Dreams and aspirations are shaped by expectations from family and society. However, there is often a disconnect between the two; family expectations are driven by the expectation of upward mobility, whereas 'society' still represents Hispanics in a narrow range of lower-status jobs. The uncertainty that being undocumented

or being on a temporary visa brings also causes anxiety and shapes how youth envision their future.

There is no conclusive evidence in terms of how immigration status impacts attitudes and motivations towards work. Some youth are more motivated because they are undocumented, whereas others are less motivated due to their non-permanent status. It is far from clear cut. Also, motivation level is inconstant and may fluctuate over time (status may also change, e.g. hope is created with DACA but there are still barriers). There is a general consensus that undocumented or DACAmented youth are more likely to (be forced to) give up on their educational and career dreams as a result of (multiple dimensions of) exclusion. Participants also tended to believe that those with a permanent status or citizenship are less motivated because they are used to having more opportunities and take those for granted.

- "Some Hispanic people that do have their papers, they don't see how hard it actually is not to have an immigration status. They start doing whatever they want" (E5, F, 20, undoc).
- "If DACA happened during high school, I would've been more motivated" (H34, M, 19, DACA).
- "People without papers are more motivated" (I35, M, 16, PR).
- "People who have deferred action, they don't take it for granted" (L12, M, 17, DACA).
- "...people who aren't documented as me but have the same experiences, they feel like: oh, because I'm undocumented, I can't do this (...) I guess they don't get encouraged enough" (X24, F, 16, citizen).

According to a study of second generation immigrants in New York City, many were “working members of the lower middle class service economy, employed as white collar clerical or service workers in retail or financial services. Their labor market position resembles that of other New Yorkers their age more than it does that of their parents. They rarely drop out of the labor force or become criminals” (Kasinitz et al, 2008, p.348). Of course, one of the biggest differences between the 1.5 and second generation is that the second generation are automatically citizens. The uncertainties that come from being undocumented or on temporary visas steep its way into every aspect of youths’ lives. Even among the 1.5-generation Kasinitz and colleagues interviewed in New York City, few were undocumented. This presents a sharp contrast to my study because of the significant influence of lack of permanent legal status but otherwise many shared experiences with the second generation. It may be that the defining difference is that the proportion of youth in the 1.5 generation is higher in non-traditional locations where the history of Hispanic immigration and settlement is far more recent.

Even though many participants have been in the US since they were very young, they still feel like their experience is different from that of their US-born counterparts or younger siblings. Despite growing up in the same neighborhoods and families and context of receptivity, citizenship provides a sense of security that many 1.5-generation are not permitted. According to some participants, this translates into fewer worries and more opportunities for their second-generation siblings, but also the pitfalls of taking things for granted. Also, members of the 1.5-generation often still have some recollections of their country of birth and can shape part of their identity around that, whereas the second generation may have never left the US. As one participant explains:

- "She [my sister] was born here. But her struggle's slightly different because she is American, she's known the culture her whole life. But, there is a cultural block in that she's disconnected from both her parents' culture and her native culture in America. I think for her it's a different struggle that's just as bad. (...) They try to group us up into all Latinos and all immigrants, but native born is not the same as those who came young. It's a different challenge. Because, when you're a first generation your parents are figuring it out at the same time as you're figuring it out. You're still . . . you're pressured to be at your parents level and help them along the way as both of you are learning. Those who were born here, their parents were already settled down, usually they're second generation or third generation, so the family is already acclimated to the culture from their home country to this country, rather than me being the first one trying to figure it out, how am I going to do this?" (G7, F, 21, PR).

Another shared that: "...my siblings were born here so they're all citizens except me. So I feel like if I can do all this and not be a citizen and be limited in all the opportunities that I have, that they can do so much more being US citizens" (U21, F, 20, DACA). Unlike Waldinger et al.'s (2007) study that finds that Mexican-Americans are 47% more likely to experience downward assimilation than other groups (including Nicaraguans, Colombians, Cubans), my qualitative research encounters little difference across the Hispanic youth experience based on country of birth., My research suggests that this is in part because 'brown' people in Charlotte are all typically perceived as Mexican. As hypothesized earlier, many Charlotteans are unable to visually distinguish between different Latino groups, which leads to a more homogeneous context of receptivity.

Research by Terriquez (2014) suggests Latino's working class stagnation has more to do with parental educational attainment than racial discrimination and other structural inequalities associated with race. Though studies repeatedly show that college-educated parents are more likely to have college-educated children, my study did not look specifically at this, but the impact of discrimination and stereotyping emerged strongly in my analysis. Discrimination, stereotyping, and exclusionary practices based on ethnicity, skin color, and country of origin still play a large role – at the local as well as national level, and in direct face-to-face interactions as well as more subtle structural and institutional ways. Not only does this influence job preparedness, hiring processes, and work experience, it impacts how youth view themselves, society, and their futures. As Kasinitz and colleagues (2008, p. 350) stated: “What differs between the native whites and the second generation groups is not the adversarial behaviors but how the larger society reacts to them.”

Education is a central component in divergent trajectories (Figure 35). Participants' comments support this representation. That said, it is over-simplified; not everyone's journey is linear and predictable in this way. College is not the only way to 'do well' in life since there are many different ways we can define success and happiness.

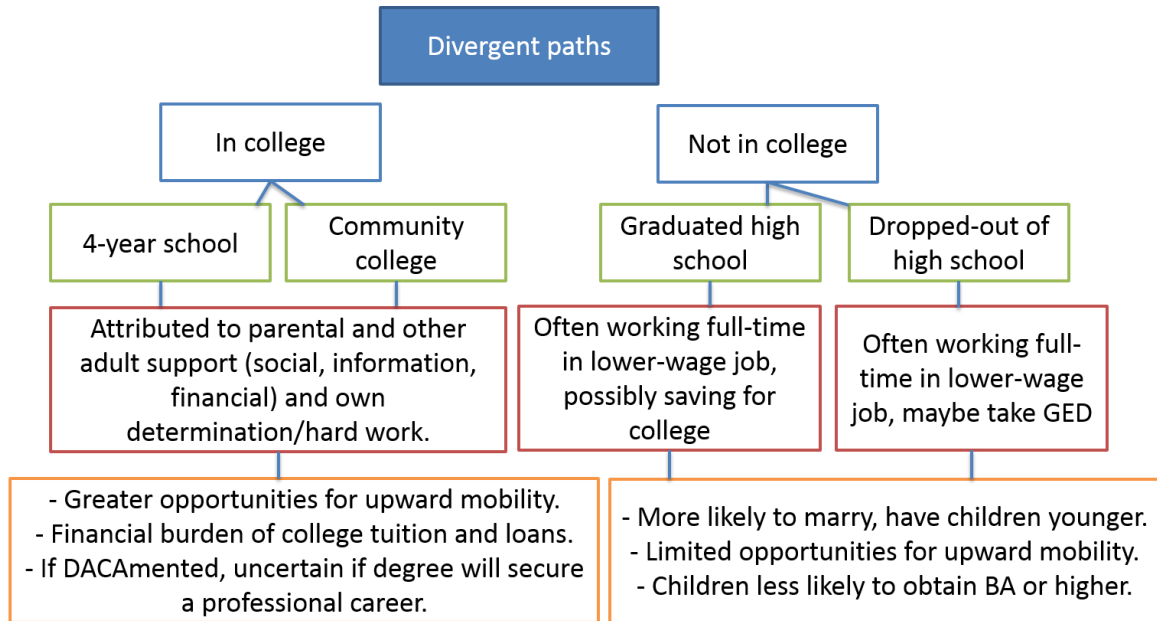


Figure 35: Simplified diagram of divergent pathways

### 7.2.2 Personal Choice (Agency)

Agency is also emphasized. Participants expressed a strong sense of determining your own path and interpret that others will 'not get far in life' due to lacking motivation.

- "...some of them are or want to be successful and some of them don't really care. They just... they don't seem to want it (...) there are people who are always gonna go and just not care and there are always people that are motivated and they come from different sides" (G33, M, 16, DACA).
- "Some people will probably take the opportunities they get and others will not care" (K11, F, 16, PR).
- "...you can divide them [Latino youth] into two groups... or maybe more. But there are the people that want to get some kind of citizenship, that's their goal; to get a job, to go to college. And there's the other people that don't really care. They don't care about school, they don't care about getting a job" (L12, M, 17, DACA).

Again, youth speak about divergent paths but this time it is contingent upon the individual themselves rather than their documentation status. This ties back to the American cultural narrative of having the freedom to define your own destiny, and the immigrant story of arriving in a new country with little resources and becoming ‘someone.’ That said, besides personal and psychological differences among people, other social and institutional factors may also be underlying this (lack of) motivation. Ambition may be higher or lower for undocumented youth and youth from immigrant families and participants provide good reasoning and examples of both.

The emphasis on agency also highlights resilience and protective factors in youth lives. Immigrant youth and their families bring strengths and develop adaptation skills that can influence or weigh out the factors working against them. Buffering factors, such as family support and mentorship, do not necessarily protect from discrimination but they do provide individuals the tools to be resilient against and navigate discriminatory situations (Shetgiri et al, 2009). As discussed in the chapter about labor market experiences, youth are motivated by their parents. This corroborates the statement that “[a]lthough parents may have measurable characteristics that put their children at risk – low education, low incomes, poor language skills, and so on – they have unmeasured characteristics that make them different kinds of parents, mostly in ways that are advantageous for their children” (Kasinitz et al, 2008, p. 352). Determination and strong family values are passed on. This can feel like pressure but it is also appreciated by youth. Adolescents who expect to do well academically and have high aspirations are less likely to engage in ‘problem behavior’ and more likely to do well in school (Jessor and Jessor, 1977; Okagaki and Frensch, 1998). Participants provided examples of positive



connections to family, peers, school, and community; social support and attachment to networks; and attachment to mentors and positive role models. These are environmental factors that can offset the exposure to risk (Foxen, 2015).

Participants also believe their immigrant experiences positively shape their character, making them more resourceful, determined, and hard-working – which are considered assets in labor market access and contributions. These personality traits foster resilience (Foxen, 2015). Resilience is “a process that examines the dynamic between risk and protective factors (Foxen, 2015, p. 27). Participants also described social skills, network building, and advocacy as socio-spatial strategies to navigate the labor market and improve their labor market opportunities. These social competencies and pro-social behaviors are also skills that foster resilience among Latino youth (Foxen, 2015).

Valuing education, having people to look up to, having involved parents and a positive relationship with family, identifying one’s own strengths, serving one’s community, and enjoying family and community traditions, are also deemed factors that support youth resilience across cultures and geographic locations (Ungar and Liebenberg, 2011).

Youth respondents are also optimistic about their future, despite recognizing the struggles they encounter. This is in line with the immigrant optimism hypothesis, which suggests that expectations of upward intergenerational mobility motivates immigrant children to foster high aspirations (Kao and Tienda, 1995). Explanations for this phenomenon include: a) self-selection among those who immigrate; b) the lack of schooling for first-generation immigrant parents has to do with poor school systems or educational access in their countries of origin, rather than lack of motivation or intelligence on the parents’ side; c) “realistic anticipation of ethnic discrimination in the

labor market” (Phalet et al, 2004, p.65).

Youth perspectives, as shown in this dissertation, match the types of capital Foxen (2015, p. 28) describes as shaping resilience among second-generation Latinos. These factors are:

- “Aspirational capital, or the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers
- Linguistic capital, including the intellectual and social skills attained through communicating in more than one language or style
- Familial capital, or the cultural knowledge nurtured within the family that carries a sense of community history, memory, and identity
- Social capital, which is understood as networks of people and community resources that can provide both instrumental and emotional support to navigate through society’s institutions
- Navigational capital, or the ability to maneuver through social institutions by drawing on culture-specific skills and experiences (for example, strategies for maneuvering through hostile environments)
- Resistant capital, or the knowledge and skills fostered through a resistance to subordination that creates self-esteem, self-reliance, and desire and strength to persevere in order to combat unequal structures and transform society.”

In a study about risk and protective factors experienced by Latino immigrant youth living in a non-traditional immigrant destination area (Cincinnati, Ohio), DeJonckheere and colleagues (2014, p. 16) found that individual (e.g., coping strategies), familial (e.g., family support networks), school (e.g., school and environmental supports), and

community factors (e.g., peer support networks) were determined as important protective factors that support resilience and reduce risk for negative outcomes (DeJonckheere et al, 2014, p.16). Participants in my study reiterated some of the same buffering factors, which may translate into a more successful transition into the labor market and adulthood.

### 7.3 (Possible) Outcomes of Divergent Trajectories

#### 7.3.1. Economic and Health Disparities

Negative daily experiences may accumulate to distinct trajectories and disparities in job prospects and lifetime earnings, in addition to damage to self-esteem and physical and mental well-being. Although most youth are positive about their future, fears about an uncertain future are expressed in various ways, including the fear of not being able to make ends meet (and support parents/a family).

- Fear of being “stuck working a minimum wage job”...I want to strive for better (...). I also have to think about living financially and if it is going to be enough” (H34, M, 19, DACA)
- "... just because I have the support now, doesn't mean it's going to be there forever. At some point in my life, I'm going to have to make a life of my own and I'm going to have to worry about supporting myself and how I'm going to make it in life" (Q17, M, 16, undoc).
- "I know how hard it is, especially for people just coming out of college and are finding themselves in situations where there's no work in their field or what they've worked and paid so much money for" (F6, F, 19, TPS).
- "...my Associate's doesn't really help me get a career. It doesn't. I wish it did. I thought it was going to" (O15, F, 21, DACA).

- "You have to do the work to prove you deserve it. And sometimes that's not even the case. You do all this work and you still end up working at McDonalds with a college degree" (Q17, M, 16, undoc).

Lowering expectations of immigrant or minority students can stifle ambitions and lead to self-fulfilling prophecies: "us Hispanics and African Americans, we are the minorities, and people don't expect much from us, and they probably never will expect much from us. A lot of us always end up in dead cycles and sometimes we take jobs into consideration over education and that's not right" (D4, M, 16, DACA).

Additionally, the distrust and shame of exposing themselves or their family members can also take a toll on immigrant youth: "I'm always careful because I don't want to be judged because of my status, which I feel like a lot of people do, especially with everything that's going on in politics and government. I just don't want to...I feel that my status is a secret that can really hurt me and my family so I don't like to tell just anybody" (P16, F, 18, DACA).

### 7.3.2 Limited Options, Lost Potential

Participants are aware of the limitations of not a higher education degree in today's competitive labor market (e.g. "I'm so young and so uneducated, even though I graduated from high school. My range of possibilities are so low" (F6, F, 19, TPS)), but they do not necessarily know how to successfully obtain that degree they are striving for.

The perception is that, without a college degree, one can only obtain "dead-end jobs":

- "They would definitely choose someone who has a college degree over someone who has a high school degree. But in some places it doesn't really matter because it is a dead-end job" (G33, M, 16, DACA).
- "...[those who did not go to college] are just living their life day by day, working jobs as many hours as they can" (U21, F, 20 DACA).
- "...you can't really get rich with settling for a job where high school is the only requirement, there are not many opportunities for that" (J10, F, 16, PR).

However, entrepreneurship is mentioned as a way to make a good living without necessarily going to college. Given immigrants are more likely to start their own business than US-born persons, participants are probably seeing this play out in their community:

- "...there could be [good employment options for those who don't go to college], depending on the person and maybe depending how they're motivated. But also, I do think there's opportunities to have... I guess in the construction field, there's definitely opportunities to build up your own construction and have a little small company and be a small company owner" (A27, F, 16, U visa).
- "...if I just graduated high school and not set out any further education, I would just be looking at employment in a factory or entry level positions with no opportunity to grow. (...) [but] when someone is very innovative and entrepreneurial, they can go on without college" (G7, F, 21, PR).
- "I don't think college is for everybody. Not everybody wants to go to college. (...) You can graduate from high school and build a business and get people working for you. And you can have what you wanted" (I9, M, 16, PR).

Some consideration is given to community colleges and other job training programs that are more affordable and still develop valuable post-secondary school skill sets.

- "CMS has messed up in that with putting everyone in a college prep path and making them go through all these classes when . . . all your doing in making them take all those classes is they lose interest in education, because I'm not going to do . . . I'm not going to school to do this. I'm not going to school. I want to be a mechanic or I want to open my own shop or I want to do this or that. If you give kids something that's more interesting or pleasing that interests them, it'll be a little bit more easier for them to continue on to their education or get a better job once they graduate or even push them to graduate. A lot of people aren't even graduating" (R18, F, 21, DACA).

A four-year college is not for everyone, nor is it the only post-secondary option. Two-year colleges and certification programs may provide desirable job training, career placement programs, and paths to well-paying employment. The local character of community colleges makes them uniquely tied to local public schools, demographics, and local labor markets (Flores and Oseguera, 2009). Graduates from two-year colleges can also transition into four-year colleges and complete their Bachelor degree at a lower overall cost. "Because they are conveniently located, cost much less than four-year colleges, feature open admissions, and accommodate students who work or have family responsibilities, community colleges are well suited to meet the educational needs of immigrants who want to obtain an affordable postsecondary education, learn English-language skills, and prepare for the labor market," Teranishi and co-authors (2011, p. 153) argue.

Community colleges are becoming increasingly popular for immigrant students (Teranishi et al, 2011). Locally, 14.3% of Central Piedmont Community Colleges' (CPCC) extension program enrollment and 10.1% of curriculum program enrollment are Hispanic. Parallel to the increase of the numbers and percent of Hispanic in Charlotte-Mecklenburg overall, we see increased rates of Hispanics in CPCC enrollment between 1997 and 2014. More Hispanics enroll in extension programs than in CPCC's curriculum programs. CPCC almost doubled their percent Hispanic students for extension programs between 1997-98 and 2013-14, and curriculum enrollment jumped from 1.7% (N=366) in 1997-98 to 10.1% (N=3,009) (CPCC). State institutions and private colleges tend to lag behind.

At the state level, "North Carolina's public two-year system enrolls approximately 883,000 students annually in 58 colleges and accounts for 37.3 percent of the state's higher education institutions. Latinos accounted for 3.5 percent of the community college enrollment in North Carolina, which has more than doubled since 1997" (Flores and Oseguera, 2009, p.71). However, there is limited national-level data on immigrants' enrollment in community colleges and there needs to be more research on the role of community colleges in immigrant students' lives, particularly in light of increasing popularity and growth of immigrant populations (Teranishi et al, 2011).

Comparing California and North Carolina community colleges, Flores and Oseguera (2009) determined that "[i]n a context where Latinos and Latino immigrants are new members of many communities, where national sentiment toward immigration is more inhospitable than not, and where Latinos are the least represented group in postsecondary institutions of all major racial and ethnic groups, principles of localism

may not work in favor of these newcomers (Flores and Oseguera, 2008, p.81)”. Latinos aged 21-40 in North Carolina are less likely to be foreign-born and non-citizens (59%) than Latinos in California (31.3%) and this has educational, employment, and political implications. Californian higher education policies are more supportive of undocumented immigrant students, as demonstrated by passing the DREAM Act. Localism is therefore interpreted through a state policy model, whereas in North Carolina, “in the absence of a state policy that addresses educational opportunity, local interpretations are likely to be less standardized and more in tune with their community’s response to immigrants than those in locales that follow a state mandate that facilitates (rather than restricts) increased educational opportunity” (p. 66).

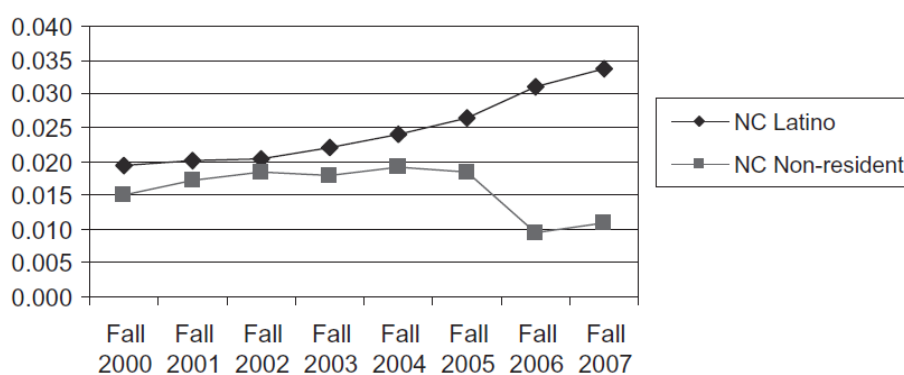
Though there is no data available on immigration status, the number of “non-resident aliens” increased post-2000 after a North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) memo was issued permitting colleges to accept undocumented students (Table 11). Subsequently, enrollment of non-resident aliens fell after 2004 when a second memo clarified undocumented students should be charged out-of-state tuition. The number of Latinos enrolled continued to increase. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) does not require college administrators to check the immigrant status of their students, unless they are international students (Flores and Oseguera, 2009). However, according to DHS, “colleges and universities should use federal standards when determining immigration status” (National Immigration Law Center, 2008b). This highlights the significant responsibility that institutions must assume in the absence of federal or state legislation to determine admissions requirements for undocumented students in North Carolina, and in a number of other states (Flores and Oseguera, 2009, p.80). This case



study illustrates an interesting inter-play of scales. Institutions at various levels – national, state, and local – are setting, sometimes conflicting, guidelines and policies and these can change within the span of a few years – sometimes in favor of undocumented and DACAmented students (as in California) or against them (as in North Carolina). Such fluctuations make it difficult for educators and youth to navigate the higher education landscape.

Table 11: Proportion of Latinos and non-residents enrolled in North Carolina community colleges (N=38). Source: Flores and Oseguera (2009, p. 79)

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, 2000 to 2007.



Despite increased attention and the potential of community colleges, youth hold hesitations about the value of an associate's degree, particularly when one is competing against an increasing number of BA and BS holders.

- "I was hoping that with my Associate's Degree I can get a job, but I can't even get any good job. Like, I like this job. It's good, but I can't really get like the professionals, up there working in an office. Not even for a receptionist, I can't get that without a Bachelor's" (O15, F, 21, DACA).

Whether it is limited access to higher education or professional job networks, socially and economically we cannot afford to lose or waste the (professional) potential...

- ...of thousands of youth who are not permanent residents or US citizens.
- ...of millions of youth from immigrant families who lack the information and networks to gain a foothold in industries of their choice.
- ...of millions of youth from lower-income families who cannot afford higher education and/or are not in high schools that prepare them for college.

### 7.3.3 Crushed Dreams

As a result of immigration status-based, class-based, and/or ethnicity-based obstacles, youth may become demotivated, live day-by-day (setting short-term rather than long-term goals because of an uncertain future), or work extra hard to ‘overcompensate.’ One person may experience these three reactions at different times or to different degrees. Consequently, youth may become more socially and spatially isolated if they feel they are unaccepted, or they make an effort to be more socially involved and spatially mobile to ‘push back’ and demonstrate they have the capabilities to get the jobs they want. This ‘push back’ may be in the form of advocacy, high levels of community involvement, and/or academic excellence. Trying to change what stands in the way, or gaining control over dimensions in their life that lie more within their hands is a direct result of their socio-political circumstances. Through getting to know my participants, I saw first-hand how some days are better than others: there are moments when the uncertainty becomes depressing and paralyzing, there are times when youth reach exceptional achievements, and there are moments when they feel that all you can do is put your head down and keep going, one step at a time.

### 7.3.4 Emerging Leaders

A small group of Hispanic immigrant youth who succeed and become leaders of/examples to their community, create pathways for other youth to ‘move up.’ With Latino youth being asked to aid presidential candidates (for example, Hillary Clinton hired Lorella Praeli, a ‘DREAMer,’ to connect with Latinos in her presidential campaign) and taking the national stage in other areas, they are setting an example for other youth nationwide. Locally, exceptional Latino youth are featured in newspapers and on TV, recognized by business leaders, and awarded full scholarships to private and public institutions. Everything they have seen and been through in their lives so far has motivated them to become leaders and role models for others. In my sample, participants demonstrate taking on leadership positions, obtaining internships, and working towards graduating college. Though their future careers are yet to unfold, they are breaking barriers and blazing trails for other Latino youth that places like Charlotte have hitherto not seen. They are showing companies and universities why they should pay attention to the growing Latino population in the US. Youth successfully take on leadership positions to make change. Their leadership and community involvement does not always revolve around immigration issues; it can also be in their field of study, at their school, for instance.

## 7.4 Implications of Divergent Paths

### 7.4.1 (Not) Living the ‘American Dream’

Limited opportunities for upward mobility perpetuate social inequalities and call US meritocracy into question. For many migrants, the American dream is still enduring. In the transnational flow of information between the US and Latin America, the US is

still portrayed as the land of opportunities. Positive information is being shared with people back home in their country of origin, and remittances sent back are financial proof of success. Migrants selectively share information, with pressure to demonstrate that their sacrifice was worth it.

For first-generation migrants, the degrees they obtained abroad often do not translate to the US:

- "My parents can't get the jobs they could in Peru. They worked so hard and had good jobs there but coming here, because of our problems and our status, they have to work in minimum wage jobs" (P16, F, 18, DACA).

The 1.5-generation's lives are still shaped by being an immigrant, socially and politically, even though they may not remember their country of origin. Youth are saddened and upset by the way they are treated in the US, personally and as a collective:

- "There are many immigrants who come to America for a better opportunity that they may not have had in their homeland, yet there are people who don't want any immigrants in the country even if they are children but they don't take the time to figure out why these children want to come to America (...) "there are many companies who are seeking illegal immigrants for cheap labor and yet those same companies are for anti-immigration. By having illegal immigrants working for them it puts more money in their pocket because they don't pay the full price as if they had an American working for them. Why are people still blaming illegal immigrants for taking the jobs some people aren't willing to take?" (T20, F, 18, DACA).

Gaining a foothold in this competitive labor market is challenging for everyone, but for some more than others:

- "In this economy it's hard to find a job. Well, it's on average probably 10-20 times harder for me to do that" (Q17, M, 16, DACA).

Despite struggles and push-factors, life is generally considered 'better' in the US:

- "I would like to go back because I don't know my family and I'd like to know where I came from. But other than that, I wouldn't want to live there (...) I'd be in danger" (F6, F, 19, TPS).
- "I think I'll stay here regardless if things happen or don't, because of the security in this country. Because in Peru it's totally different" (O15, F, 21, DACA).

Similarly to the perceptions migrants have when they move to the US, stories from family or media influence how youth perceive their country of birth, which they may not know well from first-hand experiences. Though some first-generation migrants may consider returning to their country of origin, for youth and families this is typically not an option. For 1.5-generation (and second generation) youth, the US is their home; in some cases it is the only home they know. Thus, they are not weighing out push and pull factors to decide whether or not to leave the US, they are here to stay.

#### 7.4.2 Societal Consequences

If we fail to provide educational and job opportunities for immigrant youth, society as a whole will feel the social and economic ramifications, not solely the youth and their families. One interviewee articulated this particularly well: "When it comes to giving education to undocumented students, it goes something like this: if you do not educate people then they become more of a liability than an asset to society. If they

become a liability, they will affect you more negatively than positively. If you give opportunity to people, they will become assets to communities and will be able to...they won't have a negative impact on you or your neighborhood, etc. (...) if you deny people opportunities, they will become liability to society and eventually start rioting and you don't want a riot in your neighborhood now, do you? So that's a way I can argue it. I can see many counter arguments to it but that's my argument. You give opportunity not because you want to give it, but because it will be an investment for you in the future. That's my argument as of now. Create assets, not liabilities" (F32, M, 21, DACA).

Without options for upward mobility, we risk creating a permanent working class of Latino migrants and their families. Investing in the futures of Latino youth will help them be self-sufficient, economically stable and productive contributors to society. Ripple rewards include increased tax revenue, productivity, and house ownership, not be mention the overall health and wellbeing of individuals themselves. They will remain assets to society, their parents, and their offspring. Our communities will be more peaceful because people see how their hard work pays off and that their country values them. Crime, incarceration, dissent, hunger, homelessness, and instability will be lower, all of which carry high human and financial costs to society and individuals affected.

## 7.5 Further Discussion and Reflection

1.5-generation Hispanic immigrants' futures are marked by uncertainty and hope. Participants expressed a lot to be grateful for, and they generally have a positive, hopeful mindset of their future. For instance: "I see the good side of things and I grow in that positive" (C29, F, 17, PR) and "maybe I'm too optimistic about everything, haha, but I see everything as a positive" (F32, M, 21, DACA). This observation is confirmed by an

aforementioned national study about Hispanic Millennials (Sensis, 2015): 70% of Hispanic Millennials are optimistic about their future but only 52% of non-Hispanic Millennials are. Thus, not only their age influences this optimism. A sense of agency and hopes for upward mobility may also shape their positive mindset. Still, there are reasons for concern as well. An increasing group of researchers are questioning the narrative of personal responsibility, particularly as it applies to lower-income children. A 2014 publication entitled ‘Where is the land of opportunity? The geography of intergenerational mobility in the United States’ (Chetty et al, 2014) received national attention for its comprehensive examination of the chances a child in the bottom quintile of the income distribution ladder moves to the top quintile. The researchers found significant geographic differences. Charlotte placed last out of 50 US metropolitan areas, exposing the city to an unwanted spotlight. Since then, a series of talks were held and an opportunity task force has been established.<sup>39</sup> In addition, “[t]he costs of immobility have risen, because the lifetime difference in earnings now between someone born at the bottom quartile versus top quartile is much, much greater than it used to be” (Autor, quoted in Zarroli, 2014). On November 10, 2015, Reeves and Joo from the Brookings Institute asked ‘Are children of Hispanic immigrants moving up?’. The answer hinges on how you measure it. They concluded that “Though children of Hispanic immigrants have climbed further than children from other ethnic groups, they still fall behind their white peers by a number of measures that deserve attention.” For undocumented and DACAmented youth, “with every year lived in the United States, they feel a growing distance between them and their parents as they become more acculturated. Ironically,

---

<sup>39</sup> For more information, see <http://www.opportunitycharmeck.org/>.

though, each of these years also brings them closer to the consequences and limitations of their unauthorized status” Gonzales (2008, p.225). Moreover, we cannot forget others with less common statuses, such as U visas and TPS. The barriers they face may not be as multi-dimensional, but there is still uncertainty associated with their status. In addition, because their status is less common, they lack access to accurate information, resources, and social support, and they might be forgotten in immigration reforms. Those with a permanent status (particularly US citizenship) have fewer long-term worries and obstacles but also face prejudice, stereotyping, restricted access to job-related information, and the challenges associated with living in an immigrant (potentially mixed-status) family. Youth being confronted with other people’s ignorance about Latinos and immigrants and they may lack accurate information about the policies that affect them. This combination does not bode well for their futures.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, findings from this dissertation fit partially into the segmented assimilation model, but not fully. Originally, this model was chosen because of its popularity in framing the incorporation of the children of immigrants into society. However, the segmented assimilation framework did not reflect the experiences of the youth I worked with. A potential reason for this is that the methods I used – questionnaire, interview, PAR, journaling, mental mapping, and observations – are not best suitable for measuring assimilation. A longitudinal, quantitative study may capture these trajectories better. The approach I took, however, offers unique insights into causal mechanisms, experiences, and consequences of divergent pathways.

Rather than confirming the segmented assimilation model, my data suggest that various trajectories of Hispanic immigrant youth are in the making, some with more



barriers to upward mobility than others. Most youth are able to obtain employment and apply their bilingualism and biculturalism.

Some participants report facing one challenge to obtaining their dream job (e.g. ethnicity-related stereotyping), whereas others are doubly, triply (or more) disadvantaged, e.g. due to lower SES, lack of support and information, and no (permanent) immigration status. In the face of these challenges, youth are not passive; instead, they employ their agency and resilience to devise socio-spatial strategies to improve their labor market opportunities.

Additionally, we should think critically about how we measure success and what constitutes as a 'downward' trajectory. With some exceptions, the mainstream image in society of a successful career is someone who went to an Ivy League university and spent their career gaining power and wealth. As one participant put it: "Society makes you feel like if you don't have a job that's well-paid then you didn't do the right thing" (E31, F, 19, DACA). However, obtaining an associate's degree from a community college, working manual labor, e.g., can also be part of a successful, happy life. What is key here is that we can have happy, fulfilled lives without having high-paying jobs and that career satisfaction is not the same as life satisfaction. Latino youth value the opportunity to pursue a dream job without documentation, financial and other barriers obstructing them.

Alternative frameworks to segmented assimilation that are fitting for this study, in addition to socio-spatial inclusion and exclusion, are upward mobility and stagnation, and immigrant integration. Upward mobility of immigrant youth is expected by youth themselves and their families, but, as it currently stands, I suspect stagnation or only slight upward mobility will be achieved by the majority of youth in Charlotte, with a

likely broader applicability in the South and other new destinations. This runs parallel to predictions by Terriquez (2014). Drawing on data on 1.5-generation immigrant Latinos in California, she anticipated that many of these youth will experience working class stagnation due to low household SES and low four-year college enrollment rates. “[M]ost Latino-identified youth who come from working-class backgrounds are likely to end up in working-class positions in the economy irrespective of how long their families have lived in the United States. (...) very few Latino youth are poised to enjoy upward mobility into the middle class even if—as seen in previous research—they surpass the education levels of their parents (Alba et al. 2011) or attain somewhat better jobs than their parents (Waldinger, Lim, and Cort 2007)” (Terriquez, 2014, p.404). Comprehensive strategies that enhance upward mobility for lower-income, minority, and immigrant youth will benefit the 1.5-generation featured in this research.

Integration is a two-way process that taps into the strength and benefits that immigrants and their children offer to the labor market and other aspects of society. Since there is no federal immigrant integration policy or strategy, immigration policies become the facilitators of or barriers to integration. “DACA and DAPA are ultimately integration programs. They remove the fear of deportation and family separation and facilitate access to jobs, helping local communities and economies. But since they are temporary programs and can be ended at any time, it is critical that members of Congress use the experiences of these programs to design a program that offers permanent legal status to immigrants who are already on their way to being productive members of the communities in which they live” (Singer et al, 2015, p.28). Integration occurs at the local level; therefore, we need more attention for and resources towards local initiatives and a

broader federal plan that supports such work, rather than an immigration system that counters many local integration strategies. While I recognize the political difficulties in passing such initiatives under our current polarized political environments, existing case studies such as those in Dayton, Ohio and Nashville, Tennessee featured by Welcoming America<sup>40</sup> can act as examples of the positive outcomes for everyone if such immigrant welcoming initiatives are implemented.

An important take-away point from the concepts of segmented assimilation, divergent paths, or restricted immigrant integration is how multi-dimensional the determinants and outcomes of inclusion and exclusion are. As demonstrated in this dissertation, opportunity or the lack thereof results from variables intersecting and interacting with one another. Subsequently, the outcomes are also multi-faceted and build on one another, meaning securing a scholarship for college can improve job chances and earnings, which enhances options of where you can live, the quality of foods you can afford, and your access to other resources and connections. In turn, with good health and these additional networks, more career and earning opportunities become available, creating a cycle of wealth, similarly to how cycle of poverty and deprivation work. Education plays a significant role in these cycles, offering an opportunity for intervention there, though we cannot expect that moment to start with college, we must invest in those pipelines earlier on. Investing in human capital of immigrant children and youth will therefore reap benefits for decades to come. Developing a strong bicultural identity and opportunities to gain access to the mainstream labor market will allow for happier, more integrated individuals who can provide a strong foundation for their own children and

---

<sup>40</sup> Learn more: <http://www.welcomingamerica.org/learn/stories>.

also support their parents as they age. As participants stressed, solutions must be two-generational to ensure that first-generation immigrants are not left behind, particularly as they start to age. On that note, the challenge of dealing with a large undocumented population that ages out of the workforce is one that the US is not prepared for. Failure to act will cause labor market shortages, health care dilemmas, and place a large burden on the children of immigrants. This matters for society as a whole and for the economic and social wellbeing of the 1.5 and second generation. We need to start having that conversation now and plan accordingly rather than taking a reactive approach.

From a labor market perspective, who will take the jobs that are now held by millions of documented and undocumented migrants? If their children refuse to fill into those positions – which is occurring – will this encourage another wave of migration in 25-30 years? Realistically, the chances of first-generation migrants ‘escaping’ the low-wage jobs many of them hold are slim but their children are US-educated and many are also US-born, giving them more rights and voting power. It is exciting but also frightening to see how this Latino story is unfolding in the US and in the South today, and whether or not we can gather the political and social power to make changes and avoid further injustices and exclusion.

In an ongoing struggle between structural impediments and individual agency, we see a “cultural disconnect between fate and optimism of the Hispanic Millennial immigrant journey” (Sensis, 2015, p.115). Participants provide examples of progress they can make in the face of one or multiple barriers. Recognizing these accomplishments, imagine what these young people can accomplish if we remove these barriers. On the other hand, Kasinitz and colleagues (2008) caution us to not get caught up too much with

success stories of children of immigrants and a diversifying society that we fail to see continuing poverty, discrimination, and exclusion. What happens if the negative circumstances carry on for 5, 10, 15 years and their optimism is chipped away at? They are resilient and hopeful now but I fear for the day they lose this mentality because nothing changed.

Although the data presented in this dissertation provide in-depth and comprehensive overview of the experiences of 1.5-generation Hispanic immigrant youth transitioning into the labor market, the language used is tentative, as demonstrated by the frequency of the use ‘may,’ because the transition into the labor market for this group is still playing out. This means there is uncertainty about what will actually happen but also that we have the ability to influence outcomes now. The following two chapters therefore offer avenues for change, as suggested by youth themselves. I thereby answer the final research question c): How do Hispanic youth propose to fix any issues and improve job access?

## CHAPTER 8: THE PAR PROJECT: “NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US”

I posed the final research question (How do Hispanic youth propose to fix any issues and improve job access?) to youth participants in two ways: 1) I discussed avenues for change in the one-on-one interviews with all 36 participants. 2) The question was the starting point for a Participatory Action Research (PAR) project with 15 of the original 36 participants. This chapter examines the PAR project specifically. In contrast to previous chapters, it is less analytical and more prescriptive. As such, it can act as a guide to practice.

As introduced in the methods chapter, PAR involves community members as co-researchers throughout the research process and aims to create a tangible outcome. As such, it is becoming more recognized as a way to do research *with* rather than *about* marginalized communities, and to inspire social change. PAR breaks down the traditional roles in research of the researcher as the all-knowing expert and research ‘subjects’ as passive (Pain, 2004). It sees youth as capable of making valuable contributions to scientific knowledge and their communities (e.g. Holloway and Valentine, 2000). PAR is an approach or epistemology rather than a set of pre-determined methods. As Cahill and co-authors (2010, p. 408) clarify: “When participation is presented as a set of techniques, rather than as a commitment to working with communities, it may result in the reproduction, rather than the challenging, of unequal power relations (Cahill, 2007a; Kesby, 2005; Kothari, 2001).”

I applied techniques that tapped into situated knowledge (Haraway, 1988) and gave voice to the research participants. By doing so, this study, and the PAR project in particular, demonstrates how disenfranchised study ‘subjects’ or socially marginalized groups can become co-researchers and be directly involved with identifying policy and community-based solutions to labor market challenges. Furthermore, the research is more informed and more powerful because of youth participants’ central role. From a pedagogical standpoint, this dissertation contributes to how we study individual’s everyday experiences in relation to their position in broader society, and challenge power dynamics between the researcher and the researched without compromising the rigor of the study.

When it comes to improving the labor market opportunities for 1.5-generation Hispanic immigrant youth, a slogan that arose from the disabilities rights groups and has been adopted by other advocacy groups resonates: “Nothing about us without us.” Solutions to our problems are already out there and they are known to the people who are affected by them. Qualitative and participatory methods illustrate this. We need to listen and act accordingly. We need to start seeing people as part of the solution rather than the problem. In this case, it means placing immigrants on the fore-front of immigration reform and migrant rights decisions, and giving youth a voice in discussions that affect their future. This chapter will discuss an initiative developed by participants as part of this study as an example of what an ‘intervention’ may look like and how youth can be involved in solutions.

Throughout my research, the multiple methods informed and complemented one another. For instance, questionnaire data provided a quantitative element and semi-

structured interviews allowed participants to talk about the shared, the common, and the expected. The journaling, on the other hand, was much more detailed and personal; though guidelines were provided, it offered a more open space for participants to privately write things that do not come up in the interviews. My mixed-methods approach allowed for depth, repetition, and diverse types of data.

One of the objectives of this study that so far has been relatively untouched is to employ progressive methodological approaches and analytical tools to learn about, involve, and empower an understudied and marginalized population progressive methodological approaches and analytical tools to not only gain information about but also involve and give voice to an understudied and difficult-to-access population. A Participatory Action Research project was put in place to address this.

Participatory and action research frameworks are increasingly applied to involve community members as co-researchers in studies about health disparities, minority rights, and people's everyday geographies, for instance. That said, these approaches are still often peripheral in the discipline of Geography and geographic training. Participatory and action methods have the potential to engage marginalized groups as agents of social change; however, the process of involving community partners is a delicate one and can run counter to the demands and traditions of academia. For that reason, it is essential to think carefully and critically about the ways we include communities in our research projects.

Participatory and action methods have the potential to engage marginalized groups as agents of social change; however, the process of involving community partners is a delicate one and can run counter to the demands and traditions of academia. For that



reason, it is essential to think carefully and critically about the ways we include communities in our research projects. In this section, I will touch upon: designing the study; identifying a community partner; resources and compensation; planning the sessions; executing the project; outcomes and evaluation; disseminating findings; challenges and rewards; and sustainability. Field notes, reflection notes after every PAR meeting, video recordings of the PAR meetings, and observation notes taken by a research assistant helped put this section together. I discuss these components as they relate specifically to my research with Latino youth. Though some of these recommendations may therefore only apply in studies with this population, many can be translated to working with other groups.

### 8.1 Designing the Study

Given that participatory and action research is often time-consuming and people-demanding, researchers should ask themselves if they have (or are willing to put in) the time. Even a relatively short PAR project of a few months requires a lot of work prior to getting started. In my case, I defended my dissertation proposal in January 2014 and spent the Spring 2014 semester writing grant applications, getting IRB approval, setting up a Memorandum of Understanding with my community partner, and figuring out the details for my study. Funding came around the summer, allowing me to purchase supplies and recruit participants. I started collected data in the Fall 2014 semester (all interviews and questionnaires) and ran the PAR project in the Spring of 2015, giving me the 2015-2016 academic year to analyze all the data, write up and present findings, defend my dissertation and graduate. Since dissertation projects are solo-investigations, PhD students should realize they will be expected to perform all of the tasks themselves. Even

if you are able to hire a research assistant, which I did, to help with interview transcriptions and observations notes, for instance, the vast majority of tasks (as well as supervising, training, and mentoring your potential research assistant) will fall on you.

In addition, the research question should be open enough to allow for creative approaches from your participants that develop their skills and draw from their opinions and experiences, yet narrow enough to provide some direction. In my study, the question ‘How do Hispanic youth propose to fix any issues and improve job access?’ lends itself well to using a participatory approach because only Hispanic youth themselves can answer this question and they do not need any resources other than themselves, their lived experiences and observations of the world around them. In true participatory research, participants will help shape the research questions. In a dissertation study, this may not always be possible. That said, the question developed from my earlier work with Latino youth (a Photovoice project for a community health study and volunteering with college preparation workshops), so the target population influenced and shaped my research question. I also asked participants whether they believed this was a worthwhile research topic/question and they agreed.

Lastly, since PAR does not have a specific set curriculum or method, researchers should look into various options that are best fits for their research question and target group. Recognizing both strengths and challenges for your group is important and should be acknowledged in the methodologies selected.

After the original IRB application was approved, several minor amendments were submitted. First, I adding my funding source and participant compensation once I received funding. Second, I had originally planned to conduct all interviews at the LAC

but I quickly realized that that was not convenient or possible for all participants, so I submitted an amendment allowing to interview participants at another location of their choice, provided the place was deemed safe for the participant and myself, and private enough not to be overheard. Third, I added a research assistant on two occasions (submitting their CITI training reports).

## 8.2 Identifying a Community Partner

All PAR meetings and most interviews took place at the Latin American Coalition (LAC). Having a trusted community partner was essential in securing space and offering a starting point for participant recruitment. That said, not all community organizations may be excited about your research. Keep in mind that the objectives and goals for them may be very different from yours; even if you both want to ‘help’ or engage your target group, you are likely to work on different timelines and hold different ideas about how to reach that overarching goal. Moreover, researchers have a long history of coming in to a place, ‘taking’ the information they need, and leaving, so do your best to avoid this pattern and understand if the organization is hesitant to trust you. Finding ways for your results to inform (and thus benefit) the organization’s work, or offering something else in return that is useful for them (e.g. workshops), ensures the partnership is truly mutually beneficial.

## 8.3 Resources and Compensation

When submitting a grant, it can be difficult to estimate the budget if you are unsure what the PAR project is going to look like. I originally underestimated the amount I would spend on supplies and edited my budget to increase the PAR amount (from about \$500 to \$2000) after attending a Critical PAR training at CUNY in June, 2014. This

worked to our advantage because purchasing supplies via the university may be more expensive than if you buy them yourself, and with the remaining funds I was able to support youth to attend two leadership events related to this research.

I highly recommend looking into funding options, either through national awards or local/university-based avenues. That said, it is not impossible to still complete a successful project without funding. If this is the case, ask yourself the following: a) Do you have a free space to meet that participants can access and trust? b) What kind of non-monetary ‘compensation’ can you offer participants that will make it worth their time, e.g. opportunity to establish relationships with peers, build certain skills, develop community capacity? c) If you need to send, copy, and/or print things, will you have access to resources to do so and/or are you willing to spend some of your own money for office supplies like paper, pens, markers, flipcharts, etc.? d) If you are audio and/or video recording (parts of) your project, do you own devices to do so, or can you borrow them through your university/department? e) If you plan on having refreshments at PAR meetings (I highly recommend this), are participants willing to share responsibilities for this or can you obtain sponsorships from local businesses (grocery stores, restaurants, bakeries)? Providing food at the youth meetings has multiple purposes: 1) Sharing food brings people closer together and reduces stress and group conflict; 2) Given people’s busy schedules, we had to meet during the late afternoon/early evening, around dinner time; 3) Participants may come from households where financial resources are limited and there is not always enough money for food. As such, providing food with participants helps their parents/caretakers; 4) People are more likely to participate in events/meetings where food is served.

In terms of planning the budget, keep in mind there are often restrictions on what you can purchase using grant money and which vendors you can use based on funder and university guidelines. Going through the university system and approved vendors means it can take weeks to obtain the product you want. As such, you want to plan the budget and request purchases early on.

#### 8.4 Planning, Executing, and Evaluating the Sessions

The PAR project consisted of eleven 2-hour meetings on Wednesday evenings 5.30-7.30pm, from mid-January to mid-April, 2015. In this section, I will outline how I approached the sessions to make optimal use of our time together. The following phases were followed:

- Preparations
- Developing trust
- Designing the project
- Executing the project
- Evaluating the process and outcomes

##### 8.4.1. Preparations

All 36 interview participants were invited to a gathering in December, 2014 to discuss preliminary interview results and receive more information about the PAR project. All interview participants also received a phone call early January, 2015, inviting them to participate in the PAR project and attend the first meeting on January 14. Additional information was provided to participants and their parents as requested.

In preparation for the project, I designed the initial curriculum. I put together a tentative outline of the project, initial handouts for the participants, and a rough agenda

for the first couple of meetings. I also set tentative meeting dates and prepared a short workshop about PAR and examples of other PAR projects. Though this initial plan constantly evolved throughout the project, it helped guide the project and provide structure for participants to understand what to expect.

Reading about other PAR projects and thinking about group dynamics also helped me think about what to expect and what I could do to create the best environment for the participants. I took note of various activities that I had done with groups in the past, or that I read about, to incorporate them into the gatherings.

#### 8.4.2 Developing Trust

The first meeting is arguably the most important because it sets the stage for the entire project. Developing trust within the group and with the researcher is pivotal (Amsden and VanWynsberghe, 2005). The researcher can facilitate activities for participants to get to know each other and build trust. For instance, we started with an ice breaker activity where participants shared information about their hobbies and interests, first in pairs and then with the group (people would introduce their partner).

I also emphasized confidentiality. One of the activities I recommend doing at the first meeting is putting together a group agreement, a series of guidelines on how participants feel they should interact for this to be a good experience for everyone involved. First, everyone wrote down a few things they wanted to add on their own piece of paper and then we opened it up to the group to see what everyone came up with. One participant volunteered to be the scribe and write down the guidelines upon which everyone agreed. This included: being honest, being respectful of others' opinions, listening to each other/not talking at the same time, using appropriate language/being

aware of language you use, being timely, helping each other, and coming with a positive attitude. At the end of the activity, everyone signed the document (and receives an electronic copy). We revisited this agreement half-way through the project and at the end to evaluate ourselves and offer improvements.

Being clear about the overall goal(s) and purpose of the research is also important to emphasize and remind participants of throughout the project. Though participants set their own goals for their project, there are also the overarching goals of your research and participants should understand the PAR philosophy and how their efforts are part of the research. For many people, this will be the first time they are part of a participatory process and/or a research study; therefore, doing a short workshop about ‘What is research? What is PAR?.’ This is also a good point to revisit the consent form.

Understanding that the ideas behind PAR might challenge what youth think research is and who researchers or ‘experts’ are. “By encouraging more knowledge creation at the community level, we could dispel the myth that only ‘experts’ can conduct research” (Amsden & VanWynsberghe, 2005, p. 366). This advice is echoed by Cahill (2007a, p. 301) who asserts that taking the time to develop research proficiency among all participants gives participants confidence and “helps to equalize the power relationship between the facilitator and participants (and between participants with varying levels of experience) in the PAR process.

In addition to framing the project, which provides a structure for participants to apply their creativity, it is also essential to explain what will happen with the information collected or the project outcomes. Again, participants themselves decided they wanted to have a workshop launching their website, be featured by local radio and newspaper, and

have stickers with our logo and website, but I also informed them how I would be using the video recordings of our meetings and how I would use the data gathered for presentations, my dissertation paper, and manuscripts.

Offering transparency and clarity begins here and should continue throughout the project. One way to do that is to prepare an agenda for each meeting and go over it with the participants so they know what to expect. At the end, have them reflect on what we accomplished, what went well, and what we can improve on or need to do for next meeting. Beyond the basic structure and continuous support, researchers should maintain plenty of leeway for participants to design and execute their own ideas. This can be challenging because dissertation committees, funders, and your IRB may want more specifics. Explaining the concept of PAR and demonstrating you are prepared to facilitate this process will typically reassure others around you (in academia) that what you are doing is valuable even though it is a less ‘traditional’ (though increasingly common) mode of research.

An important topic to discuss at the first meeting is best ways to stay in touch. In this project, I set up a private Facebook group, and the youth chose to also use individual and group text messages, and ‘GroupMe’, a phone app (I was unfamiliar with the latter but the youth suggested we use it). Though I typically avoid providing personal contact information such as a cell phone number, let alone becoming Facebook friends with research participants, I do not know if it would have been possible to keep people engaged and share information any other way. Because of our tight timeline, it was essential to that participants were reminded of, and assisted with, their tasks and ensured that we were making progress. Personal disclosure, if used appropriately, can break down



boundaries between the researcher and participants. Using multiple forms of communication that youth use on a daily basis was their preferred communication strategy. Occasionally, I would use email to send documents and communicate longer, non-pressing messages. Three participants did not use Facebook so I would call and text them instead. Communicating with all participants individually, rather than using only group messages, can help people see their individual engagement is valued. Though communicating on various platforms can take some time, I believe it was essential to the success of this short, intensive project.

Think about what to do if participants are late to or miss meetings – because this is inevitable. Even when participants understand the importance of being at all meetings, realistically other (more important) events come up, people fall ill, or transportation falls through. Other things may happen that are outside your control. For instance, we had to reschedule one meeting due to snow, making it unsafe for people to be out on the roads. The next week, it snowed again. To avoid getting behind on schedule more, I set up a conference call for participants to call in. Though it is not the same as an in-person meeting, we were still able to discuss ideas and not fall behind schedule further. Moreover, it maintained some of the continuity of communicating regularly, which is important in keeping participants engaged.

#### 8.4.3 Designing the Project

Using a summary of results from the interviews and questionnaires, participants worked in small groups to identify the main concern(s) the group wishes to tackle and brainstorm potential projects. The guiding questions were:

- Topic – What is the main career-related challenge faced by Hispanic immigrant youth that we want to address? Or maybe it's a strength you share that we want to highlight or raise awareness about.
- Audience/target group – Who are we trying to convince/educate/reach out to?
- Method – In what way(s) do we want to get the information across? E.g. written text (report, handbook, essays, poetry), oral presentations, video, photography. Will the information be delivered in person, on a website, via social media?
- Can we get this done in the timeframe (10-12 weeks) and with the budget we have (\$1,800)?

Participants pointed to the lack of information about the job application process, ranging from creating a resume and preparing for an interview to and knowing what degree to obtain (and how to obtain it) to obtain your “dream job” and finding mentors along the way. As one participant expressed:

- "...we, the 1.5 generation, it's really hard especially because they are the first generation here to start growing up in the United States, so they don't really have the people to look up to, even to apply to college, how to dress for a job interview, how to fill out a proper resume, how you should act during an interview. It's really not something that you can ask your parents because they have lived in a different time and a completely different environment, so it's really hard for Latinos to know what to do and just implementing programs like that to help guide the Latino youth" (N14, F, 21, DACA).

Youth decided to target immigrant youth or youth in immigrant families (1.5 and second generation) because they have similar experiences with regard to information access,

even though the information may be valuable to US-born youth with US-born parents as well. Though this can affect non-immigrant youth, it is more likely for immigrant youth or first-generation Americans to experience this because their parents did not grow up in the United States and often have little knowledge about how the educational system and professional job markets work, and how to support their children as they come of age. This does not mean that immigrant parents do not value education or want their children to be successful professionals, in fact, rather the contrary is true; education is often emphasized as important and the main reason for migration is often “a better life” for their children (upward mobility is expected). However, parents may not know how to guide their children’s academic and career journey, they may have limited time for this if they are working long hours. In addition, immigrant youth are more likely to attend under-resourced public schools where opportunities for college and career counseling, mentorship and professional development may be limited. Furthermore, they are more likely than native-born White children to be in an educational environment where the expectation is for everyone to attend college. These are among the factors influencing higher high-school drop-out rates and lower college-graduation rates among immigrant youth, translating into restricted career opportunities. Interview results corroborated this.

Once a main concern was identified, participants worked in small groups to brainstorm projects that would address this issue of lack of job-related information for (Latino) immigrant youth. Youth were encouraged to ‘think big’ but the project needed to be small enough in scale so that they were able to accomplish their goal(s) and achieve success. Notably, participants were all thinking along the same lines and had similar visions of what they want the project to look like. That made it much easier for us to

come to agreements about what to do. When there were different ideas, e.g. about the first seminar, we found a way to do both. Everyone took notes, either on their handout or on the flipchart sheets. Notes were reviewed and combined/summarized to share with participants at the next meeting.

The following week we revisited the main ideas and started thinking through the details, using guiding questions and remaining components we still needed to discuss. Again, participants worked in small groups initially and then shared their thoughts with one another. As a group, we decided on the content of the website, the content and date of the seminars, a timeline, the budget, and how we were going to promote the website and seminars. If we were unable to make a decision immediately, several options were written down and re-visited at the next meeting. For example, it took some time to come up with a group name and a logo. For the group/project name, participants brainstormed options together and individually. We decided on 'Youth ADAPT NC.' The acronym ADAPT stands for 'Always Developing by Acting, Preparing, and Transforming' and was chosen because it reflects the professional development focus of the project as well as the ambition and assertiveness of the youth. The word 'adapt' itself was deemed appropriate because it expresses the adaptability immigrant youth have in the labor market and in society in general, living with their native culture and language within the mainstream culture and English of the US South. 'Youth' and 'NC' were added to specify our participant and target group, and geographic location. Once the project name was chosen, the domain name for our website followed accordingly: [www.youthadaptnc.com](http://www.youthadaptnc.com).

I outlined the options for our budget and participants indicated what they needed to execute the project. Once the list was established, I had to check with the university

vendors to see if they offered the products requested and what the prices were. On several occasions, I made the purchase with my credit card and was reimbursed via the university.

We had a difficult time making a decision on language. Originally, the idea was to have the website in both English and Spanish but we only had time to create it in English. We later came to the consensus that if we were asked by visitors to translate it, we could consider doing that. We also had multiple conversations about narrowing down the target group for the website and seminar. Overall, the process of brainstorming and deciding on a project was a smooth one, during which participants expressed many creative ideas and decision-making skills.

The meetings were a mix of small group, individual, paired and large group activities and discussions. These different forms of interaction gives those who are less likely to speak up in a larger group setting the opportunity to have their voice heard and be fully engaged. Power dynamics also became apparent within the group during the PAR project, as in all group work. In this case, the older participants were often more likely to contribute than the younger participants. I managed this by providing opportunities for youth to work in pairs and smaller groups (where people often feel more comfortable to contribute) and asking for their input in large-group sessions. Having youth of different ages also provided an opportunity for older youth to be leaders and younger youth to learn from their college-aged peers. I found it helpful to read about group stages<sup>41</sup> (e.g. Jacobs et al. 2011). Understanding how groups develop helped me know what to expect and what reactions are ‘normal’ in group development.

---

<sup>41</sup> The stages are: forming, norming, storming, and performing.

#### 8.4.4 Executing the Project



Figure 36: Youth ADAPT NC logo

Participants put together a plan of action and delegated roles. The process of executing the project was marked by co-learning, learning new skills, and tapping into the various skills participants already had. For instance, one participant is an artist and designed several drafts of a logo for the group to vote on. The chosen original sketch was transformed into a beautiful graphic image (Figure 36).

Another participant showed interest in designing the layout of the website and did a phenomenal job. Two participants joined me on the Spanish radio and spoke eloquently about the project and their involvements. The content of the website was based on survey

results participants collected from peers. All participants worked in pairs to create content for the website, researching secondary sources and interviewing professionals. Youth also took responsibility for recruiting guest speakers and reaching out to local businesses for food sponsorships for the professional development seminar. I offered help and support by reminding youth of tasks they signed up for, writing a sponsorship letter, communicating with local media, scheduling space to meet at the LAC and local library, editing/providing feedback on their website content, purchasing supplies, and providing additional information and resources when needed. For the 'meet the contributors' section of the website, the group decided that each participant would write a paragraph about themselves. However, many were unsure how to put this together so I created a template as an example of what to write. This clarity seemed to help.

While executing the project, some youth decided to work individually while others worked in pairs. If someone missed a meeting, I encouraged another participant to fill them in. I would also call the participant to see what information they received, what additional information they may need, and if they had any questions. In one case, I met separately with two participants who felt they were behind and wanted to get back on track. I was impressed that they took the initiative to reach out and set up that meeting. The group decided at the beginning of the project that participants could not miss more than 2 gatherings. Two participants were unable to complete the full project because their work schedule changed.

It quickly became apparent how important it was to offer participants opportunities to develop themselves as well as develop the project they designed. During the third meeting, participants filled out a 'Valuing Diversity' activity that had them

reflect on who they are and how they interact with others. There are no wrong answers. Answers are categorized according to four main personality types or leadership styles: The "doer" or controller, the "communicator" or promotor, the "listener" or supporter, and the "thinker" or analyzer. Each 'type' has certain characteristics, for instance at school/work and as a friend or family member. As we debriefed the activity, participants reflected on how accurate they felt their outcomes were and what that meant for this group. They identifying personal and group strengths and where conflicts may arise as a result of different communication styles and personalities. We talked about valuing all leadership styles and using diverse styles within the group to your benefit. It also helps frame conversations if tensions or conflicts emerge. In our group, the lack of conflict (externally) can also be explained using the personality styles: most of the participants were listeners and thinkers, who are less likely to be very vocal and disagree with one another. For me, this information was also helpful because it encouraged me to ask more directly what participants wanted to do, rather than assuming they would voice it themselves. Similar activities can be facilitated with all kinds of groups. I have noticed that these types of activities can bring groups of people closer together, foster new understandings and appreciation for differences, and make individuals more comfortable with their own personality and leadership style.

The youth decided that they would organize two professional development workshops: one for them, as a learning opportunity, and another open to the public (open to everyone but targeting other immigrant youth), at the end of the project. For the first seminar, an established entrepreneur facilitated a leadership workshop with the group, in which youth took an assessment identifying their strengths, weaknesses, passions, and



values for their life and career. Using stories and examples, she also provided examples of difficulties she faced as a professional in corporate America, being a first-generation university graduate, a woman, and Hispanic. As a pioneer in the business world and someone who is very involved in the Charlotte (business and non-profit) community, in addition to having a family, she exemplified the idea that you can have multiple identities. This inspired the participants. Sharing her experiences as a woman, as Hispanic, coming from a working class, 'immigrant' family (from Puerto Rico), helped participants envision a form of leadership that was attainable to them. This experience reflected the importance of mentorship and for youth to see examples from people 'like them,' as emerged from the interviews. The assessment the youth took, building on the Valuing Diversity activity, enhanced their self-awareness and confidence.

Another memorable moment was when we attended an event at a local Latin American art gallery together. We were invited by the above-mentioned guest speaker because her company was organizing it. The event was themed 'Women in Publishing', featuring four accomplished female publishers in the Charlotte Metro Area. More broadly, it was an opportunity to hear about their career and professional development, learning how to succeed in today's demanding marketplace no matter the industry, and work-life balance. The youth benefitted from hearing honest reflections about non-linear career paths, persevering even when things get difficult, and balancing career goals with other aspects of life. Furthermore, being surrounded by female and Hispanic professionals (in addition to US-born White and Black professionals), stunning art pieces by various Hispanic artists, and a young Latino singer entertaining the crowd with his songs sent a clear message to the youth that Latinos can be successful in many fields.

Interview results showed how important this is as young Latinos come of age, shape their dreams, and enter the labor market. In addition, the group was asked to stand, introduced and applauded at the event. The recognition as young leaders made them feel valued and that their efforts mattered. This experience brought the group closer together and re-energized the project. For many, it was their first professional event, including a reception with hors d'oeuvres and a coffee and dessert networking session. In that sense, it was a turning point. It was unexpected because it was not in the original PAR plan, but the opportunity emerged through our outside contact who saw the work that we were doing and wanted to highlight it. We debriefed the event a week later. Some youth mentioned they felt a bit uncomfortable because it was a new setting with unfamiliar (and older) people; however, getting this experience outside their comfort zone made them grow. They were pleasantly surprised with how their presence was valued and felt special that they were mentioned in front of all the attendees. As for the panelists, one participant commented how great it was to see three successful leaders with all very different personalities and backgrounds. It reminded him of the discussion we had about valuing different leadership styles. Another participant added to that, explaining that it was refreshing to hear that successful career women can still make time for family and other activities. Several participants also mentioned the inspiring quotes and messages the event gave them.

With new energy, the group returned to working on their project. At the time, a lot still needed to be done. Consequently, participants decided on an extra meeting to work on the project. The atmosphere during the meetings became more relaxed and I could tell we were more comfortable with each other. Some youth were still more likely to speak up

than others, mainly due to personality and age differences but everyone was engaged. A journalist from a Spanish newspaper visited one of our meetings and interviewed participants, who spoke eloquently about the project content and goals, and their reasons for participation. Once a draft of the website was put together, featuring our logo, pictures, and the content we had so far, the participants had a moment of ‘this is actually happening and the project is coming together.’ For me, that was interesting to witness because I had been seeing it come together all along but for them it had still seemed very fragmented till that point. Hearing them reflect on that feeling made me realize many had been feeling that way and their confirmation of ‘this is going to work out and be a successful project’ acted as a reassurance for individuals as well as the group as a whole.

As the main researcher, I facilitated all meetings and answered any questions participants had. In longer, less structured PAR projects, there may be opportunities for participants to take on various additional roles, such as facilitating meetings, taking notes, providing snacks, and sending reminder messages to the group. However, due to limited time, I focused on providing other roles to participants, including designing the project logo, designing the website, and writing specific sections for the website. Though topics are pre-determined, there was flexibility for participants to choose the project and decide on the details. As Cahill (2007a, p. 300) states: “while the project was undefined, it was not unstructured. However, precisely because it was collaborative I could not plan and structure the process ahead of schedule and the research evolved in a slightly messy, organic way.”

Although a lot of the planning took place prior to the PAR project, a significant amount also took place in between meetings. This is inherent to PAR because you do not

know what the exact project will be prior to meeting with participants and each meeting builds on the previous one. I find that this cyclical process of planning and re-planning, reflection and action helps make adjustments when needed and stay open to ideas that you would not have thought of yourself. Through this process, the project becomes more meaningful and successful than if it had been rigidly designed by a sole researcher.

Executing this project also taught me about working with youth, specifically working with millennial youth. For example, Millennials are “racially diverse, economically stressed, and politically liberal,” “confident, connected, open to change,” “digital natives” who are “upbeat about the nation’s future” (Pew Research Center 2015). Their lives have been “shaped by technology” and they “value community, family and creativity in their work” (White House Council of Economic Advisors 2014). They are meaning seekers, eager to have a positive impact on society. These are traits the group demonstrated that are characteristic of their generation and the age in which they grow up. Thus, at the same time as their personalities and lives are shaped by being an immigrant and being Latino in the US South, they are products of a new generation of Americans coming of age in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. I believe this is important to take into consideration when working with young people. As learners, they need to be engaged, not simply ‘talked at’ or given a task. Wilson and Gerber (2008, 29) recommend four pedagogical “adaptations” to the Millennial “personality”: enhanced clarity of both course structure and assignments; student participation in course design; pre-planned measures to reduce stress; and rigorous attention to the ethics of learning.” I can see how this translates into participatory research settings, too. Even if the topic is serious, finding ways to incorporate fun can help keep people engaged. If participants feel connected to

the group and find social value in meetings (in addition to a broader sense of being involved with a positive movement), they are more likely to continue the project. This may be hard for researchers to see because we want to ‘get to work’ or aim to be as efficient as possible, but from the participants’ perspective, they will appreciate some ‘down’ time to connect with one another and this will enhance the experience for everyone, including the researcher.

I also learned the value of balancing process and outcomes, and enjoying the process. At times, I was tempted to encourage participants to stay focused on the tasks and remind them that the project needed to be finished. However, they (indirectly) reminded me that process is as important as the final outcome – in fact, what is learned through the process is an outcome of the project. We included conversations and activities that promoted engagement, inter-personal connections, and ‘soft skills’. Looking back, these were an essential part of the success of our project. Balancing process and outcomes involves seeing participants as full people with full lives, often balancing many responsibilities, and therefore being understanding and encouraging at all times. This includes recognizing that not everyone will be able to make it to every meeting or complete tasks at home. I checked in with participants using short activities that encourage participants to share what they are feeling at that moment. One of the activities is going around the room – at the end of the meeting – and having each person summarize how they are feeling in 1-2 words. Another activity we often started the meetings with goes as following: on a flipchart paper, draw a horizontal line around the middle. This is the ‘average’ line. Ask every participant to draw a face (their face) on the paper, with their mood in relation to the ‘average’ line. For example, if someone is feeling

happy, they might draw a smiley face far above the line, closer to the top of the paper. If someone is feeling stressed or sad, on the other hand, they may draw a stressed or sad face under the line. Ask participants to elaborate on why they are feeling that way, if they wished to share. I think this exercise, and similar ones, helped us see each other as three-dimensional people.

While we were working on putting together the website and seminar, it seemed overwhelming to add on the journaling and mental mapping activity and group coding session. Participants were instructed to write and draw a map at least one time a week for a period of one month about any thoughts or experiences related to work and job search. Examples and guiding questions were provided. When I originally introduced the activity, I could tell this was overwhelming for some youth because it was on top of what they already had to do for the PAR project and other responsibilities in their lives. There was also some confusion and remaining questions that emerged throughout the month. Still, after a month, everyone handed in at least one mental map and one journal entry and most participants completed all four. I put together guidelines for youth to code their work based on grounded theory (Straus and Corbin, 1994; Glaser and Strauss, 2009), going through the process of: 1. Open coding, 2. Axial coding, 3. Selective coding. Although I think this component could have benefited from some additional time (for the writing itself and analysis), I was very impressed with the youth's coding results. I could see it helped them look at their own work through a new lens. Given the level of reflective thought and honesty, I believe the process of journaling and drawing the mental maps was also beneficial to the participants. I then coded their entries using the same process (prior to viewing their coding interpretations), adding an additional layer of

participation and the opportunity to see the differences between participants' coding and my coding.

The professional development seminar took place at a local public library in East Charlotte. About 40 people attended. Each youth brought some food to share and we also received chips, salsa, and empanadas from a local restaurant. The schedule included introductions of youth participants and a brief overview of the project, a panel discussion, the website launch and networking. Panelists were a MeckEd career pathways advisor of a local high school, the general manager of Norsan Media (the largest Hispanic media conglomerate in the Southeast), and an education outreach coordinator from Charlotte Works. The guest speakers (a Latina, a Latino, and a Caucasian female) were invited through contacts the youth and I have in the community. The first part of the discussion consisted of pre-determined questions for the panel, followed by questions from the audience. Two PAR participants moderated the event and I keep track of time. In preparation, we devised a list of questions to ask our panelist, including 'What was your first job and what did you learn from it?', 'What do you wish you had known when you were in high school or college about preparing yourself for the labor market?' and 'When you are hiring someone, what kinds of skills are you looking for that set a candidate apart from the rest? What are other employers looking for?' Questions from the audience were related to higher education, resume writing, and dealing with challenges and conflict in the work place. PAR participants wore their Youth ADAPT NC t-shirts we had designed and proudly showed the website to the crowd. Attendees commented on how professional the website looked and how well it was presented. Prizes were raffled off at the end and all attendees received a folder with additional job preparedness information from

Charlotte Works. The event was featured in a Hispanic newspaper (online and in paper form) the following week. This event was a good way to end the project.

#### 8.4.5 Evaluating the Process and Outcomes

After the seminar, the group and I met one final time to: 1) evaluate the PAR project (process and outcomes) and 2) celebrate the group and their accomplishments. All participants were present. The evaluation process was two-fold: first, all participants filled out a short anonymous survey (see results in Figure 37; all answers add up to 13). Second, we had a group discussion allowing participants to elaborate on why they chose certain responses. Examples are provided in Table 12.

Through my participation in this project, I...	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Learned more about research			1	7	5
Learned more about myself			1	7	5
Developed skills that will help me in the future				3	10
Improved my ability to work with others			2	4	7
Improved my ability to communicate my ideas and opinions			1	6	6
Gained confidence in myself			2	4	7
Made new friends/connections				4	9
Feel more prepared for future jobs			1	4	8
Helped other youth improve their job-related skills			1	3	9
Overall, I...	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Enjoyed being part of this project				1	12
Think we worked well as a team				2	11
Feel like my voice was heard and valued				2	11
Think the facilitator communicated well with us				1	12
Think the facilitator was helpful				1	12

Figure 37: PAR participants' survey results



Table 12: Participant feedback

Question	Examples of participant responses
i) How do you feel if at all that this project has taught you about research?	<p>“It’s about working with organization and not spontaneity.”</p> <p>“It was cool to apply the things I was learning in my psychology classes and it helped me understand research more.”</p>
ii) In what ways, if at all, did the project help you learn about yourself?	<p>“It helped me learn about the different leadership styles and helping me understand what kind of leader I am and want to be.”</p> <p>“I realized that besides the fact that everyone has different leadership styles, a leader gets things done. I did not write about myself before and it helped me realize what I want for myself.”</p> <p>“It helped us see our perspectives and to notice what you do and do not agree on.”</p> <p>“Having to write the journals was something I never put myself to do. I do feel more confident in myself.”</p>
iii) Do you think this project helped you prepare for the job market? In what ways?	<p>“I learned more about discipline in turning things in that are necessary to advance in the project. In overall I really learned about doing research for all the website sections.”</p> <p>“I think that I looked over my resume and had the opportunity to touch it up. Sometimes I don’t know how to present it. A lot of the things that we were talking about on the night of the seminar are really applied and I got experience that when I was with my manager. It helped me realize, this is what I am looking for and this is what I need. I got to understand how people are hired.”</p> <p>“It helped on learning on how to make connections and make a follow up.”</p>
iv). Do you think that this research project helped you improve communication skills?	<p>“I think I improved my writing through the journals and website.”</p> <p>“I think that it improved me to open up my ideas in a positive way.”</p> <p>“I am not a person that really talks a lot and so I think that this has helped me to talk and explain myself better.”</p>
v) Do you think your ability to work with others has improved? Working with other people you may or may not have worked with before.	<p>“I usually don’t like to work with other people because I like to get things done quickly by myself. I like thinking in my own way. But I liked working with others on this project.”</p> <p>“I’ve worked with some groups before but every time I do it is really different. I really enjoyed it.”</p>
vi) What kind of challenges did we encounter?	<p>“A lot of time that we meet, life happens and you realize people are doing other things. You need that whole organization as a whole and you need everyone here on time. That gets really hard!”</p> <p>“I remember trying to decide what our product was actually going to be.”</p> <p>“I think our challenge was focus. Just like xxx said, we were trying to tackle every single issue and took into account everyone’s opinions.”</p> <p>“I think it was more like the time because when we started, it was only a small group of people and some people wouldn’t show up. I know I did not show up for like two weeks and when I did, I felt a little lost.”</p>

	<p>“We also have insecurities about the things that we talk about, such as networking. It’s easy to say to one person to go talk to another person but you realize that it’s about insecurities that we have ourselves.”</p>
vii) (How) were we able to overcome these challenges? What made you stay engaged?	<p>“...the day that we were doing those assessments we worked great with each other.”</p> <p>“It’s kind of like till you realize how much we can actually do. After the second seminar we were getting to know each other, we needed to ask ourselves, are we actually going to be able to do it? Well it happened and it was great. The seminar made us realize how legitimate the project was going to be. It definitely felt like a good accomplishment.”</p> <p>“I think communicating went well because you know we all had to start somewhere. ‘</p> <p>“It was nice to know that, yeah, it would have been easier to quit, but you realize how important it is to continue especially when you have already done. It was a long commitment.”</p> <p>“Saying that you are part of a group such as this one sounds really good. Even doing the website. It really felt really good.”</p> <p>“I remember when we were first coming here you gave us a really happy and thrilling reason to keep coming.”</p> <p>“It makes me think on how much research we need in our community.”</p> <p>“I don’t do anything at home. I just stay at home and it really feels really good to do something with a lot of people. I am really glad I came to it.”</p>
viii) What do you say about the group size?	<p>“I think it was a good size. I think it is really hard to get work done with large groups and you don’t really get to make great friends. It was a comfortable size.”</p>
ix) What was your favorite part or moment of the project?	<p>“I really liked it when I went to the radio station.”</p> <p>“Honestly doing some of the radio work was a good experience that everyone should have. You get to build a connection there as well.”</p> <p>“I don’t know, I had a lot of moments. I enjoyed it. “</p> <p>“There were a lot of moments that I liked, the most was the event because you could see that people were interested. It was hard to network but I did it. I got to see how you do it.”</p> <p>“The [women in publishing] event was perfect because we got the project for free. I got a glance what a project should look like.”</p> <p>“I have three; I liked it when we were brainstorming the idea because of how productive we were. The leadership event and our event. When we did the coding, I enjoyed doing it even though it wasn’t an assignment.”</p> <p>“Mine was the art gallery. It was the first time I set a goal. I could only see older people.”</p> <p>“I liked the [women in publishing] event because we got a model of how an event is supposed to be.”</p> <p>“...when the guest speaker came and she talked to me. And it was nice to experience that I did it [this project] with other people.”</p>

We also debriefed the seminar. Participants were happy about the panelists' contributions, the turnout, the food, the venue, and the questions from the audience. Suggestions for improvement were: make the event more formal (especially in terms of attire), have a sound system so everyone could hear the panelist better, and tailor the questions to the specific experiences of the panelists.

Ongoing critical reflexivity about the research process – in addition to the outcomes – is central to participatory studies. This reflexive process engages participants as well as the researcher(s) and should therefore be built into the research timeline throughout the duration of the project. Throughout the PAR project, I made an effort to receive feedback from participants about the process and their experience. This was scheduled during meetings (often at the start or at the end, with the whole group) but also took place informally on the side, during breaks or before/after meetings, often one-on-one. Though youth were asked to provide feedback informally throughout the project, the final evaluation session helped formalize the feedback process and sparked reflections from the perspective of looking back at the process.

Another essential component of closure is celebrating accomplishments. I think this is particularly important for projects that revolve around large social issues that are not suddenly 'fixed' and where the impacts are not felt directly. Working on issues of equality means building 'celebrating the small wins' and building moments of joy into the long-term fight to re-energize each other and keep the movement going. In this case, it meant recognizing each participant with a gift and a certificate of completion, and inviting the group to provide positive feedback to one another.

## 8.5 Outcomes and Sustainability

In this action research study, the Youth ADAPT NC website and youth professional development seminar are ‘tangible’ outcomes. 40 people attended the seminar and, as of April 6, 2016 (almost 1 year after launching the website), it has received 3,100 visitors from all across the US and several other countries. In local presentations and other dissemination methods, further efforts will be made to attract visitors.

One of the most significant challenges of engaged research is what happens to the project and the participants after the study (or funding) ends. Youth ADAPT NC no longer meets, but I regularly share events and ongoing opportunities for community involvement with participants. Even though the group is no longer active, I believe youth participants still carry their skills and experiences gained from the project (as expressed in the evaluation focus group) into their lives. Participants can use this experience on their resume, for job and college applications, and in future endeavors. I have also served as a reference for several participants because I can speak directly to their abilities, personality, and accomplishments. In a sense, it is like taking a course and knowing that the course will end but also that you are investing in yourself and becoming more confident and capable at reaching your larger goals as a result of that temporally-limited involvement. It would be interesting to follow up with participants five years post-PAR to see what stuck with them and the (potential) lasting impact of their partaking.

Given the common struggle to make participatory research outcomes sustainable, we should think critically about why this is the case and what can be changed. Working with community partners who are able to continue the work may be one way to attain

this. Within academia, recognizing participatory research and its outcomes more can incentive faculty to take on longer-term projects, knowing it will count toward their tenure.

## 8.6 Disseminating Findings

Different parts of this study were presented at the following conferences:

- 2014 Race, Ethnicity, and Place (REP)
- 2014 and 2015 SouthEastern Division of the Association of American Geographers (SEDAAG)
- 2015 and 2016 Association of American Geographers (AAG)
- 2016 Urban Affairs Association (UAA)

I hope to publish 2-4 journal articles based on this research and incorporate the PAR project into a REP book chapter written with co-authors Heather A. Smith and Brisa Uriquieta de Hernandez.

Non-academic or community dissemination is a core part of the participatory process. As Van Blerk and Ansell (2007, p.313) point out, feedback is an obligation to participants and dissemination is a potential agent of social change. On April 20, 2016, youth co-researchers and I presenting findings at the Latin American Coalition (see posters in Appendix). We also presented findings at the Levine Museum of the New South on April 26, 2016. Results will also be disseminated locally to participants and their families, community organizations, local media, the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, and other interested stakeholders.

## 8.7 Challenges

Like other participatory researchers, Hall (2005) grapples with questions about the role of the academy in PR and the status of knowledge generated in a PR process. There appears to be a common and ongoing frustration among participatory researchers that it is difficult to work in the communities from a university base because the academy uses and creates knowledge differently than communities and workplace situations. Consequently, the university may not always recognize the rigor of collaborative research. At the same time, academics are expected to publish and are financially rewarded for this process, whilst collaborating community partners are not. Though Hall provides no solutions for this situation, these comments may help prepare future participatory researchers for the contradictions and self-conflict they may face. Also, despite these challenges, PR is increasingly being taught at universities around the world since the 1990s and researchers in various fields are working on making academia more friendly towards participatory and action research.

Participatory research can seem particularly incompatible with graduate research because it is better conducted as a team rather than individually, and there can be a tension between the project's timeline and needs, and the department's and institutional norms and constraints (Armstrong & Mairena-Torres, 2012). Yet, by involving community members you arguably build a team. By reducing the scale and length of the project, my PAR project became more manageable and feasible. Still, because I also used other methods, I spent a year collecting data (beyond the time spent writing the IRB, establishing community connections, and applying for funding) and not every graduate student will be able to spend that time, especially if the study is a Master's thesis.

Logistically, it may be difficult for participants to meet on multiple occasions. By choosing a relatively central location in the city, off a main road with bus transportation, this challenge can be minimized. The location, time, and level of engagement to expect also depends on the group you are working with. For instance, youth may not have access to a car but they are used to having scheduled meetings, especially if they are still in school. From my experience, Latina mothers have less time to meet than their adolescent children because they are often the sole caretaker of younger children and the household. From being involved with two community health groups of Latinas for 2.5 years, I found that, if childcare is provided and a sense of community and common purpose is established between a group of Latina mothers, long-term commitment and engagement in a participatory research project can follow. Latino fathers are typically the most difficult to engage because they tend to work long days 6-7 days a week.

Advice from other PAR scholars and their work (e.g. Kindon, 2010; Kindon, Pain, & Kesby, 2007; McIntyre, 2003; Sutherland & Cheng, 2009; Wang, 2006) helped me shape my PAR project and know what to expect. This includes being cautious not to place participants' opinions above my own (they too have biases), and keeping track of my reflections on the process to gauge whether the core goals of PAR are being met. Armstrong and Mairena-Torres (2012) provide some valuable reflections on applying participatory methods in a Master's thesis study. Detailed accounts of the different steps taken to complete the project are followed by reflections on the process and the impact on the researcher, supervisor, and co-researchers. For instance, the importance of clear communication is discussed (texting worked better with the youth co-researchers, whereas email and Skype were used to communicate with the supervisor), and the authors

recommend knowing what resources are available when planning the project and not getting caught up in buzzwords like ‘empowerment’ but truly exploring the nuances and meaning of this potential PAR benefit. Other suggestions I followed are: involving the group in deciding on the form of the project; acknowledging my positionality as an outsider; not making any promises; practicing honesty, integrity, compassion, and respect; and being flexible to changes or unexpected turns (Kendon, 2010). Resource, time, and power challenges will remain but their impacts can be reduced by appropriate planning, communication, and continuous reflections.

My initial timeline deemed unrealistic and I am graduating nine months later than originally anticipated. However, I would not have changed this, because the extra time allowed me to apply and secure funding and do justice to the multiple stages of my research project. If you have a strict graduation date, make sure you plan accordingly by overestimating the time needed for your PAR project, with leeway.

The PAR project raised questions about navigating confidentiality and protecting participants’ identity. After a few meetings, I added a disclosure statement (approved by the university’s IRB), because I felt uncomfortable between what the consent form states about confidentiality and the level of disclosure participants were prepared to give. PAR projects are often very public in their nature and participants may choose to disclose themselves (name, images of themselves) in the product (website, video, e.g.) and its promotion (in local media, online, e.g.). Consequently, it was important to clarify and document – for my own ease, the integrity of the research, and the protection and understanding of participants – that the video/audio recordings of the meetings, the journal entries and mental maps were part of the research and will be kept confidential



and secured. Participants were not obliged to disclose their identity (e.g. name, picture) in any of the products or promotional materials related to this project. This was all part of the outreach process (not the research) and was therefore optional. Any involvement the participant chooses to have after the last PAR meeting (e.g. managing the website, assisting with community presentations) was also optional. I would recommend clarifying this in a disclosure statement, especially when you are working with minors and the PAR project may publically share personal information.

At times, during PAR meetings, there seemed to be a lack of excitement from participants, demonstrated by their body language. Participants may not have been aware of this but this could be observed on the video recordings. From my previous work with high school and college students, I have learned that a disengaged appearance may not always indicate that the individual is paying attention. Moreover, a lack of energy may not always be triggered by the meeting but rather by the time of day (early evening) and participants being tired from school, work and other activities they are involved with (mental maps and journals indicated most youth participants were busy and dealt with stress). A lack of excitement also encouraged me to spend less time talking, switch gears often, and schedule more time on activities that directly engage participants (such as working in pairs on the website content). I think this also ties back to working with youth and particularly Millennials because, growing up in the digital age, they are used to multi-tasking and receiving many stimuli. They learn best by best engaged, using their creativity, and understanding the purpose and meaning of their work.

Overall, Groupme and a private Facebook group or group Facebook messages were effective means of communication. However, there were numerous times where I

would ask a question and I would not receive (m)any responses. I learned that making group decisions and getting feedback is best done in person. If a response is only needed from a few people, sending them individual text messages or phone calls is the best way to get an answer outside meetings. Additionally, though most youth nowadays will have their own smart phone with internet and unlimited text and calls, researchers should be mindful that not all youth are allowed or able to afford this and measures should be taken to also keep those participants informed (e.g. via email, mail, phone calls to home, or whatever is suitable and preferred by the participant). On several occasions, lack of transportation was a problem but we were always able to resolve that through carpooling.

Lastly, one of the challenges was 'missing data' due to participants not completing the journaling and/or coding exercises. While most participants completed all four mental maps, journal entries and personal coding, several missed the coding exercise or handed in fewer than four entries (because they forgot or did not have time to do more). If this were the only participatory method I had used, I would have been more diligent about setting up an additional coding session and making sure each participant submitted at least four entries. However, I felt doing so would have distracted from all the other tasks we were working on for the website and seminars. At the end, the quality of the data was high, the individual coding outcomes were an excellent addition, and I had enough data to analyze the journals and mental maps.

## 8.8 Rewards

Staying true to the PAR approach, youth participants were involved in all steps of the project and, through their participation developed skills and gained experiences that will help them in the future. For instance, they networked with Charlotte professionals at

local events, we were featured in the local newspaper and on the radio, and they were able to practice writing, oral presentation, and team work. I highly recommend incorporating participatory and action research, even as part of a thesis or dissertation because I believe the personal, research, and social rewards outweigh the challenges.

This PAR project offered multiple opportunities for learning and growth for the researcher, the participants, and others involved (research assistants and the community partner. In the interviews, participants were asked to reflect on the assets they, and other Hispanic immigrant youth, bring to the work force. Throughout the PAR process, participants *demonstrated and developed* the assets they bring to the labor market and their potential as future leaders. It empowered the youth to take risks, develop their skills, and feel accomplished. In our evaluation meeting, youth reflected on their journey of becoming more comfortable with each other, gaining confidence in themselves, and learning new knowledge about research and this subject matter along the way. They were challenged to work together as a team and come to consensus, as well as take responsibility for their individual tasks. They were exposed to new environments and recognized by local leaders. Incorporating exercises that ask participants to share, for instance, recent accomplishments, or something they learned so far can bring the group closer together and help everyone learn more about each other's lives and interests. At one of our sessions, we did a paired role-play in which participants practiced how they would describe their involvement with this project to future employers. Participants shared what they came up with, as well as what parts had been difficult to articulate. Participants found it helpful to practice this and hear each other's input. Based on this activity, I typed up a 2-page document summarizing the study and points youth

mentioned so they have this for future reference for resumes, interviews, and scholarship applications.

I spent ample time discussing the different themes that emerged from the data, with my research assistants (RAs). Over the course of the study, I employed three RAs using funds secured from my NSF DDRI Fellowship and two UNC Charlotte's diversity enhancement mini-grant. The first, a UNC Charlotte undergraduate (senior) Latina, immigration activist, and teacher-in-training, expressed gaining new insights about herself and her community. The second, a UNC Charlotte undergraduate (sophomore) Latino training to become a social worker, provided feedback on my findings and shared his observations of the PAR meetings. Not only has mentoring and training undergraduate students been a rewarding experience for my RAs and I, the conversations with my RAs and their observation notes enriched my study by providing an extra layer of input and Latino youth participation. The only disappointment with my Spring 2015 RA was that a family issue emerged and he was not able to complete all the hours in time. As a result, the remaining RA funding was lost. I took on the remaining work he was scheduled to finish. This also applies more generally: PIs have the ultimate responsibility if RAs do not complete the work assigned within their allotted time frame or within their paid number of hours.

The third and final RA was a participant in the PAR project. During the Spring of 2016, he assisted with the dissemination of the dissertation results. I specifically sought him out because he is an artist (he is also the one who designed the Youth ADAPT NC logo) and I was looking for assistance to present data in a way that would be appropriate, visually appealing, and approachable to various non-academic audiences. Since he was

not a UNC Charlotte student, this slightly complicated the hiring process, but I was still able to hire him as a temporary part-time employee, thanks to support from departmental administrators and an additional UNC Charlotte Chancellor's diversity enhancement mini-grant.

Furthermore, the quality and reliability of the research outcomes and process were enhanced through the participation of immigrant youth. The slogan "nothing about us, without us" communicates the idea that decisions should not be made without the full and direct participation of members from the group(s) affected by the decision. As such, the data and outcomes of this dissertation would be limited by not including immigrant youth in a meaningful way. Involving research 'subjects' also humanizes them, allowing the researcher to reflect a more nuanced and multi-faceted version of reality. In other words, writing about the challenges immigrant youth face can portray them as two-dimensional, homogenous victims. Through PAR, these youth are seen as they truly are: complex individuals with diverse identities and personalities, who care about their future and their families. They may face similar challenges that should be exposed, but they are part of the solution rather than the problem. They are agents of change and we should tap into their potential by fully engaging them in society.

Sensitivity involves being aware of the experiences your participants may have but not making assumptions of boxing people in based on that. I find that knowing the literature on youth, undocumented migrants, or people in lower-income households can certainly inform the researcher but it can also act as baggage, blinding the researcher to the full humanity, agency, and multi-faceted identities of the participants. You can navigate that balance by listening carefully, keeping an open mind, being open to being

proven ‘wrong’, and setting high but realistic expectations.

Power relationships cannot and arguably in some cases should not be completely broken down in the research process (Kendon, 2010). There was an inherent unequal power structure between the youth and I because I am older, White, and a graduate student. However, this power dynamic was diminished because I am not that much older than they are (I was 26 and turned 27 during the data collection phase), I am still a student, and I am (also) not a US citizen. I have been on an F-1 international student visa for almost nine years and, though the process has been smooth for the most part, I can relate to a sense of not belonging, not being able to apply for certain jobs and scholarship, and the uncertainty about being able to stay in the US. Furthermore, the positionalities of the researcher and research subjects are not static; our subjects impact how we view the world and construct knowledge and vice versa. We are all actors and agents in the construction of situated knowledge and simultaneously learners and teachers (Dowling, 2010; Haraway, 1988). In meetings, I made it clear that I was speaking from my perspective and experiences, not as an all-knowing authority. I presented my relationship with the participants as a two-way learning process. As we developed more of a relationship (the youth and I, and the youth amongst one another), we were able to work more closely together. I therefore believe that, if you are open to listening and value participants’ inputs, the initial power structures and discomforts are likely to fade quickly.

Building on the information and trust gained in the first two phases, the PAR group developed and executed a project to improve their chances in the labor market and may also benefit their peers. By engaging a small group of youth in the second phase of the study, I shine light on new ways to approach the issue of economic opportunities of

immigrant youth. The purpose of their involvement was to give youth themselves the platform to collect and construct knowledge through reflections and discussions, culminating in a tangible group outcome. Though the overarching topic was pre-determined, participants confirmed the relevance of my research questions and there was flexibility for them to choose the project and decide on the details. As Cahill (2007a, p. 300) states: “while the project was undefined, it was not unstructured. However, precisely because it was collaborative I could not plan and structure the process ahead of schedule and the research evolved in a slightly messy, organic way.” My PAR project developed in a similar fashion.

For those new to PAR, it is worth recognizing that, while participants do a lot of the ‘work,’ the process does not simply ‘happen’; it is a carefully and intentionally designed project that requires continuous re-assessing, planning, and ‘behind the scenes’ work on the researcher’s end. Though the rewards – for the research, the researcher, and the participants – outweigh the challenges, researchers must inform and prepare themselves prior to diving into participatory and action research. In addition to reading the literature published about PAR, I recommend seeking out courses, trainings, and other PAR researchers. Challenge and unforeseen circumstances will always emerge but their impacts can be reduced by appropriate planning, communication, and continuous reflections. In sum: be intentional, ready to work, open- minded and prepared to witness and undergo transformation.

## CHAPTER 9: HOW YOUTH PROPOSE TO IMPROVE JOB ACCESS

In this dissertation, I have examined the various experiences 1.5-generation Hispanic immigrant youth have transitioning into the work force and the socio-spatial strategies they are currently using to navigate the labor market. Based on the challenges youth face and the assets they bring, and drawing on the full range of research approaches in this project, this chapter offers an array of recommendations from youth themselves about what they would like to see occur to improve their employment prospects.

Involving youth and/or Hispanics in policy and intervention development related to their needs is not a novel idea but it is rarely done. It was therefore important to me to build research questions and a framework for analysis that allowed for the input of Hispanic youth themselves to be highlighted.

Though I asked specifically about changes youth would like to see, I did not expect the overwhelming number of ideas and insights for change participants brought up. This reinforces the belief that youth should be included in decisions made about them ("Nothing about us without us"). Though participants were generally not well informed about public policies, they were aware and had strong opinions about several key immigration policies. Indeed, the overwhelming number of ideas offered by the youth were programmatic in nature. Participants were particularly knowledgeable and creative when it came to devising programmatic interventions to improve their labor market opportunities.



## 9.1 Programs

### a. Information about education and career

Like Perreira and colleagues (2008, p.42), I found that “Many immigrant Latino students in North Carolina had high academic aspirations but did not know how to achieve those aspirations.” The same holds true for their career goals. College and job information sessions (for youth and their parents) at schools and local organizations would better inform youth about their options and how to navigate their academic and career trajectories. Efforts include spending time on outreach to ensure people know about such events, e.g. via local media, social media, and in schools. In addition, professionals who work with youth, including employers, teachers, school staff, and counselors, would benefit from better understanding the experiences and barriers faced by immigrant youth in order to provide them accurate and appropriate information.

- "...in general, having more resources. Expanding the programs that are here at the LAC, the SAT prep and the College Access Para Todos program [and the job bank downstairs] because I have seem it's been very helpful to all families, not just undocumented families" (E31, M, 19, DACA).
- "...we need to be informed about stuff like that and participate, because if you don't participate, that's how it goes away" (E5, F, 20, undoc).
- "...educating counselors, creating programs for students to go to other services if they can't get help from their school. I know the coalition has the youth program, so programs like those that delve into encouraging them and seeking out routes and opportunities for them to continue, rather than allowing them to feel like they

have a roadblock and they can never get past the fact that their parents were working in this factory and they're going to work in that same factory as well and that's going to be their life" (G7, F, 21, PR).

One of the questions event organizers struggle with is how to get people to show up to their information sessions, workshops, etc. This is a common challenge for service providers and also youth themselves who are taking initiatives: "I did try to start a club there to help Latino students but even then the students weren't getting much help anyways, they were really not motivated and I didn't know how to motivate them. It was just hard. They needed help but a lot of them didn't recognize it and they didn't want to and a lot of them already had the mindset that they didn't want to come to school so they didn't care. So it was hard for me to say: hey, if you do this, it would help you" (E31, F, 19, DACA).

Participants offered the following advice to help promote programs and attract attendants:

- "I believe kids are always on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter. So if there's an initiative on social media maybe they will see the information on there and they will learn about it and then people say: come out and if there's drinks or food or something then people always come, if there's snacks or something" (U21, F, 20, DACA).
- "I've noticed especially with the Latino community is that we like being around a good environment. We like an environment that has good vibes, where there's food and there's a good conversation, nothing . . . not boring. Something that's lively. I think that attracts a lot of our community, it's hard to get the Latino

community to be self . . . like push themselves to be like: ‘I’m still going to go to this because I need this,’ just because I don’t even think that they know they need it. But, I think things like making it a good environment would be first start talking to them, seeing that it is beneficial to them to keep going to things like that” (N14, F, 21, DACA).

- “...bring it to the radio, the newspaper, they’re huge for the Latino community” (O15, F, 21, DACA).

In terms of the location for information sessions, schools are the most common suggested site for these programs. Other options are apartment complexes and community organizations (only trusted ones – many first-generation Latinos did not grow up with the notion of a community center). “At libraries, at schools are definitely great places for them to be at. Just anywhere public. Where it’s easy to get to, where it seems like the population needs it the most. (...) the only reason people wouldn’t go is because of their schedules aren’t flexible” (G33, M, 16, DACA).

Interview participants were divided about who the target groups of these educational sessions should be: some said all Hispanic youth, whereas others suggest focusing on all foreign-born youth or all minority youth. Their reasoning behind these options is in line with what we know about the experiences of these social groups. For instance, targeting Hispanic youth means sessions for parents will typically be in Spanish. There are also good reasons for focusing on immigrant youth who share the experience of being first-generation Americans with parents who often have limited knowledge about how the educational system and professional job markets work. Opening up sessions to all minority youth acknowledges the additional challenges non-white youth face, e.g.

labor market discrimination and disproportionately higher likelihoods of living in poverty. A similar conversation emerged when PAR participants formulated the intended target group for the Youth ADAPT NC website.

As discussed later in the chapter, by setting up a professional development seminar, and developing a website with job-related information, participants of the PAR project worked directly on making information more accessible.

b. Mentorship and role models

Youth call for programs that connect youth to Hispanic professionals in the area to show that Hispanics can work in any field, to broaden youth networks, and to provide access to mentors and information. The ripple effects of these programs can extend beyond the program length, as youth launch their careers and, in turn, act as mentors and role models to others:

- "...your ethnicity plays a big role when it comes to having connections, even within a company. And if I were to get hired in a company as a minority, I can definitely, people can come to me and I can help them get into the work field in this place" (F32, M, 21, DACA).
- "...mentoring in a huge one to help guide people. That's one of the biggest things I'm seeing, mentoring, and showing people the many roads that are available to them" (F32, M, 21, DACA).
- "...more organizations that show that Latin people can get far" (P16, F, 18, DACA).

- "...give them a mentor, someone that they can look up to, that has been through something relatable to them and you know, have programs that explain, these are the options " (R18, F, 21, DACA).

In Charlotte, the Latin American Women's Association (LAWA)<sup>42</sup> and Circle De Luz<sup>43</sup> already provide mentorship to a select group of youth. Working on expanding these programs would help make these resources accessible to more youth.

The importance of mentorship is emphasized by other scholars as well. For instance, Foxen (2015, p.5) pointed out that "community-based programs and mentors had often played a central role in fostering resilience, serving as a critical support for both parents and youth." Mentors can provide emotional and psychological support, build youths' self-confidence and teach skills. Similarly, Barajas and Pierce (2001) suggest that facilitating bicultural socialization and having mentors of color available for Latino and Latina students can improve their success in college. Likewise, Mundra and colleagues (2003) point out that Hispanic underrepresentation in managerial and professional occupations can be addressed by, e.g., offering more mentoring resources. "Mentoring is widely regarded in the literature to be lacking for Hispanics (Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995; Knouse, 1992; Melendez, Carre, & Holvino, 1995)" (p. 520), they write. A Korn/Ferry International (1998) study found that only 27% of Hispanic males had a formal mentor at their company and only 3% of the formal mentors were Hispanic. It is

---

<sup>42</sup> LAWA is a non-profit organization that "offers mentoring and tutoring programs for students in the Charlotte, NC area to enhance academic and social development and increase high school graduation rates". See more at: [http://www.lawanc.org/who\\_we\\_are/](http://www.lawanc.org/who_we_are/)

<sup>43</sup> "Circle de Luz radically empowers young Latinas by supporting their transformation through extensive mentoring, holistic programming and scholarship funds for further education." Girls start the program in grade 7 and 'graduate' the program when they graduate high school. Circle de Luz provides a minimum scholarship of \$5,000 to each young woman that graduates high school. See more at: <http://circledeluz.org/mission-vision-and-beliefs/>

important to raise these numbers because “formal mentors provide such critical assistance as advocacy, instruction in the so-called rules of the game, and critical social network introductions,” which are essential in reaching leadership positions (Mundra et al, 2003, p.520). Additional fronts to work on are human capital (education, work experiences, training), and economic and spatial barriers.

c. Job training and connections

This category is in line with the previous one. Youth participants mention the need for programs that help youth gain connections in their fields of interest and certifications would also improve their labor market access and marketability:

- "...if you want a skill, there should be a workshop or something where you can learn that and it can be certified" (G33, M, 16, DACA).
- "...having the Mayor and people with higher power helping, there's more connections and more help for students to find jobs. For companies or industries to see who these people actually are, instead of this because they are defined by their ethnicity, they are just kind of stereotyped" (D4, M, 16, DACA). "Youth employment program" (T20, F, 18, DACA).
- "...providing resources and connections with other Latino professionals around Charlotte" (N14, F, 21, DACA).
- "...an opportunity display. You know that these places are hiring" (W23, M, 16, DACA).

In the book *Latino Talent: Effective Strategies to Recruit, Retain and Develop Hispanic Professionals* (2007), Rodriguez provides a detailed overview of how these ideas can be realized. For instance, traditional recruiting strategies may not work for Latinos because

they are too impersonal. A corporate best practice example is provided of General Mills who invite 15-20 high-achieving Latinos college student to a Hispanic weekend program, in which they expose the students to networking events, a tour that visits Latino communities, and dinner at a General Mills executive's home. The program results in a 90% acceptance rate of the job offers extended to these students because they feel more connected to the company. Common mistakes include the 'one-shot approach,' i.e. having one big recruiting or training event rather than a more sustained effort. There is also a demand for initiatives that build the pipeline of available Latino talent for the future. With a growing Latino population, nurturing Latino leadership and offering mentorship is increasingly important and can act as "a potential source of intellectual capital to help combat the pending labor shortage due to retiring baby boomers," (p. 11) Rodriguez argues.

d. Hispanic student organizations

Participants pointed out the importance of building confidence and cultural/ethnic identity formation as important building blocks to succeeding academically and professionally in life. This is pivotal in middle and high school, when much of this identity development takes place, though the need for this group formation and sense of belonging continues throughout life. Being part of Hispanic organizations helps young people develop leadership, communication, and organizational skills, and form a foundation for future social, professional and civic engagement.

- "...giving opportunities to students in high school to develop who they are as they're mixing in their cultures and to educate others, rather than making them to

stick out. (...) let minority students get together and empower them" (G7, F, 21, PR).

- "CPCC there's no Hispanic program. There's no Hispanic club, nothing. I wish we had... (...) I wish they had at least a place to talk about it" (O15, F, 21, DACA).
- "The closest thing I can relate to is Voces de Latinos. It's a local club at East Meck. Expanding it and bringing in more resources, assistance, emergency assistance as well" (Q17, M, 16, undoc).
- "...having at least one Latino organization, club, would benefit the Latino community, to make them feel welcome, not make them feel like us Latinos, go away, we're not going to be part of the school" (X24, F, 16, citizen).

Akin to the discussion in part 'a' of this section, participants felt conflicted about determining whether such clubs and organizations should be focus on only Latino youth or more inclusive and open to all interested parties. On one hand, they see the value of creating safe spaces for only Latinos to get together. Such efforts can strengthen cultural and ethnic ties. On the other hand, youth are hesitant to exclude others and see the importance of bringing together different racial/ethnic and cultural groups to enhance inter-group understanding and focus on common ground.

- e. Higher education scholarships which are open to everybody, regardless of citizenship.

Financial support would make it easier for non-citizen youth to attend college.

- "There are not many scholarships for students with DACA or scholarships for people who don't have DACA" (D30, F, 17, DACA).
- "have loans for new recipients of DACA" (F32, M, 21, DACA).



- "give loans at least to all students, regardless of their status as long as they can show something, because, at least that could be an option. There's no options right now. You can't get grants, you can't get loans" (O15, F, 21, DACA).

With rising college costs, two-year colleges and certification programs can be fitting alternatives or intermediates to four-year schools for those looking to save money and gain specific job skills. "[C]ommunity colleges could attract even more immigrant students through outreach programs that help them to apply and to navigate the financial aid system. (...) Community colleges themselves could raise funds to provide scholarships for immigrants and undocumented students" (Teranishi et al, 2001, p.153). At Central Piedmont Community Colleges (CPCC), for instance, undocumented and DACAmented students may be eligible for in-state tuition if they receive support from their employer, but this is not widely publicized<sup>44</sup>. This ties back to Flores and Oseguera's (2009) example of localism in North Carolina higher education policy; due to lack to state policies providing in-state tuition options for DACAmented and undocumented, CPCC created an institutional policy. Such actions become de-facto integration policies, due to lack of state or federal measures. The North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) has suggested colleges should admit undocumented students but that they should be charged out-of-state tuition, though local community colleges may determine their own enrollment policy for undocumented students (Flores and Oseguera, 2009). On March 19, 2010, the State Board of Community Colleges approved a policy allowing undocumented immigrants to enroll in community colleges as long as they are a graduate of a US high school, they pay out-of-state tuition, and they do not displace a North

---

<sup>44</sup> This can change quickly and without warning or announcements so may become outdated.

Carolina or US citizen. This holds true as of February, 2016, though bills have been introduced to grant eligibility for in-state tuition for undocumented students who received a high school diploma or GED within NC and attended NC schools 2 or 3 years (depending on the bill) prior to graduation (ULead Network, 2016).

- f. Other, e.g. tutoring, school resources for low-income students.
- "Or kids who don't have the resources needed to succeed, maybe if they have a really, really, really hard time getting school basic materials or don't have access to internet, probably they could do better if they had basic things like that" (A27, F, 16, U visa).
- "...make a club for tutoring" (X24, F, 16, citizen).

These suggestions tie into the broader opportunity structures of lower-income students and the limited educational resources and supports for individualized attention in public schools.

## 10.2 Policies

In general, participants expressed a limited knowledge of policies in general, which can be anticipated. What is more surprising is the limited knowledge about immigration policies that directly impact them and their families.

- "Immigration wise, I feel like I follow protocol because I do get my paperwork ready every 18 months. State policies: I drive with a license. Local policies, I don't even know what local policies we have. I do follow the speed limit, that's about it" (F6, F, 19, TPS).
- "I'm not really aware of any federal policies or any local policies" (I9, M, 16, PR).

- "I'm not up-to-date with local policies, I tend to look at more federal, because they affect me more. Locally, there are policies that have helped a lot of people but me personally, being Latin, not really. Not that I've seen" (P16, F, 18, DACA).
- "I'm actually not too familiar with any local and state policies" (R18, F, 21, DACA).
- "They are kind of similar, right? Local and state" (U21, F, 20, DACA).
- "Like the rules, the regulations? Local, I don't have anything to view on that. Federal, I'm not really familiar with it, I can't say I know it, I can't give you my opinion on it because I'm not very familiarized with it. North Carolina policies, that I've been very confused about because it has been changing a lot" (X24, F, 16, citizen).

Barriers to knowing about policies may include: everyday stresses/survival take(s) precedence, limit access to the public/immigrants about policies, the immigration system is very hard to understand, immigration policies keep changing, people disconnect from politics because they are upset by hearing racial slurs and anti-immigrant rhetoric, youth in general may feel disconnected from the political process and current political establishment.

Despite lack of specific knowledge about policies, there were several key policies that most youth brought up in general terms. In contrary to the program recommendations, suggestions for policy change were all in relation to DACAmented and undocumented migrants. These seem to be the policies that affect their daily lives the most. They are also the ones that have been highlighted by advocacy organizations and discussed in mainstream media (that does not necessarily mean that public knowledge is

high about these policies, because many media tend to oversimplify and politicize the policies, focusing on one or two of the most controversial points).

a. In-state tuition

As previously mentioned, in-state tuition would help DACAmented youth afford higher education.

- "Within Charlotte and North Carolina, definitely providing in-state tuition for students that have resided here for more than a year and, you know, have kept up with their paperwork and are trying to go to school. And that's one of the things stopping many students from continuing into higher education" (C3, F, 17, DACA).

Passing the DREAM Act at the federal or state level in North Carolina would address this. Contrary to common misconceptions, many unauthorized persons pay taxes, but they are ineligible for benefits paid for with tax revenues (Connolly, 2005). Texas was the first to pass such a bill in 2001. As of January, 2016, 16 states offer in-state tuition for undocumented students—California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Texas, Utah and Washington. Oklahoma and Rhode Island only allow in-state rates through Board of Regents decisions. California, Minnesota, New Mexico, Oregon, Texas and Washington undocumented students to receive state financial aid. Arizona, Georgia and Indiana specifically prohibit in-state tuition rates for undocumented students, and Alabama and South Carolina prohibit undocumented students from enrolling at any public postsecondary institution (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2015). Thus, there are significant variations by state. Some of the youth I interviewed would even

consider moving to a different state if they have family there, but that is not a viable option for most young people.

There is extensive work done about undocumented youth going to college and in-state tuition policies like the DREAM Act (e.g. Connolly, 2005; Flores and Oseguera, 2009; Mahatmya and Gring-Pemble, 2014; Batalova and McHugh, 2010; Olivas, 2009, 2012; Flores, 2010; Barron, 2001; Kim, 2012). Research has measured that in-state tuition policies significantly raised college enrollment rates of Latino foreign-born noncitizens (Flores, 2010a, 201b). “The results were strongest for older high school graduates, who were found to be 4.84 times more likely to have enrolled in college than not after the tuition policy than their counterparts in Southwestern states without a tuition policy (Flores 2010b). There is also evidence that passing in-state tuition policies (ISTP) have economic benefits (Vargas, 2010). In a quantitative analysis analyzing why some states passed ISTP and others did not, Vargas determined that:

- “the states that have banned the policy have been states that have not been traditional immigrant destination states” (p. 56)
- states that have banned in-state tuition policies are, in fact, more conservative than states that both passed and states that have not acted on the policy, statistically significant at the 0.01 level. (p. 53)
- there is no statistical difference in the fiscal health between states that have passed and states that have banned in-state tuition policy (p. 53)
- states that have banned in-state tuition have higher poverty rates than those that have passed or not acted on the policy, but there is no statistically significant

difference between states that have passed in-state tuition policies and those that have not acted on the policy (p. 53-54)

- states that have passed in-state tuition policies have higher poverty rates than states that have not adopted the policy,(55)
- as the percentage of Latinos increases, states both pass and ban in-state tuition policies (p. 55)
- after controlling for covariates, “states that have passed in-state tuition are financially healthier, on average, than states that have banned and states that have not acted (p. 56)
- as the percentage of undocumented immigrants increases, the odds of banning in-state tuition policies also increases” (p. 56)

b. Opportunities to gain professional licenses, to serve in the military, and to travel  
The importance of being able to serve in the military came up multiple times.

- "I have also met many students who, like me, wanted to join the military but were not able to. If comprehensive immigration reform is not granted, I believe they should give us the opportunity to fight for the country that we want to give back to, that has given us so much, but doesn't give us the opportunity to give back" (C3, F, 17, DACA).

Also, there are numerous professions that require professional licenses, which are out of reach to DACAmented and undocumented individuals.

- "...one of the reasons that stops me from being a doctor is you need a license and to get a license you need to be a resident or a citizen. So that's one of the things that stop me from getting my dream job. That's an obstacle for my sister, she

wanted to go into the medical system too but because of that whole barrier she's looking at other options where she can get a job" (P16, F, 18, DACA).

The ability to travel, be mobile across borders, to see family and have international experiences, is imperative to youth. The pain of not being able to see parents, aunts and uncles, or grandparents, or finding out they passed away and not being able to attend the service, can be unbearable.

- "I would like to go to Mexico, see my family over there. I would love to see that. If they do that, I'll be happy" (Y25, M, 17, DACA).

c. A pathway to citizenship

US citizenship allows for full participation and contribution to society. Beyond the increased access and opportunities these policies would provide youth, these policies have important symbolic value; they provide a sense of belonging and recognition that they are valued as people and have the right to be here.

- "I do want to continue to work up to being a citizen. Like I said, I'm interested in politics and I feel I would want to have a voice in the politics of where I'm living" (A27, F, 16, U visa).
- "If you're an immigrant who obeys the laws, who's never gotten in trouble, who pays taxes, who is a good citizen, then they should deserve residency, as least becoming a resident (...) when I become a resident then I'll have everything that I wish for" (D30, F, 17, DACA).
- "[Citizenship] would be a great help. Not just in general for school and working but I would definitely love to be able to travel back to see my grandmother and my sister and my nephews who I've never met before (...) I would love to be able

to vote and be a part, really take part in the community. Since I've lived here since I was little I want to be able to be part of the community, this is home, and have that chance to say I voted, I took part in making change. That would be really good if that happened but I think many of us would continue to fight for citizenship because we want to be a full part of the community and some people might even want to run for mayor or things like that" (E31, F, 19, DACA).

- "Obviously, pathway to citizenship is always good...I guess that's not a battle for me to fight. Right now what's on my mind is renewing my DACA. Whatever organizations push for and legislation changes happen, I will do what I can but my mission right now is to get as many connections as possible, so I can help other people down the road. As I am more focused on the education part of the battle than in the legislative part" (F32, M, 21, DACA).
- "...a better solution would be either have DACA transform into an actual path to citizenship after a certain amount of time that you've been on it, because every time you renew your DACA, everything goes into play. Your criminal record, have you done your taxes, are you still in school, are you still a productive member of society, because you've already been prequalified and qualify for those things, I don't see the reason why, if I'm continually proving to you that I'm an active member of society and I'm a good citizen, I'm paying your taxes, I'm providing for my community, I don't see why I shouldn't be allowed to be a citizen from that. (...) you're building a whole other culture of new age citizens" (R18, F, 21, DACA).



Policy change to better incorporate undocumented and documented migrants into US communities is by no means a novel idea. Still, this research reiterates the importance of several key policies from the perspective of youth and points out the damage done in the remaining political environment.

Terriquez (2014, p.407) reminds us that “unless measures are taken to improve the educational and career opportunities for the majority of Latino youths who come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, very few will experience upward mobility into the middle class.” I do not want unauthorized migrants in the US any more than Donald Trump wants – but my reasoning behind that and strategies to achieve it widely diverge from his. Nobody deserves to be undocumented and it does not serve the country to have a large undocumented population who are part of our nation but on the economic, social and political margins, “permanently locked out of meaningful participation in American civic life” (Kasinitz et al, 2008, p.368), unless comprehensive policy changes are made.

Though not specifically mentioned by participants, Foxen (2015, p.7) reminds us that “all attempts to build resilience among Latino and other poor youth of color must go hand-in-hand with broader structural changes that will reduce the chances that youth, as well as their families and communities, experience systemic aggressions to begin with. Policy solutions that address and reduce the environmental risk factors that poor communities of color are exposed to—high levels of poverty, unemployment, under-resourced schools, housing discrimination, violence, racial profiling and excessive police force, family separation due to unfair immigration laws and incarceration, etc.—are crucial in this regard.”

### 9.3 Other Suggestions

- a. More opportunities to show people what they are capable of, because “actions speak louder than words. (...) It’s not what we can say, it’s more what we can show that would change the mind of people” (D4, M, 16, DACA).

Youth want opportunities to show, rather than tell, others (non-Latinos, non-immigrants) what they can do. This may include encouraging companies to promote true diversity and inclusion in the work force, so that Hispanic youth can show everyone they are talented and capable: “it would be so helpful if organizations could help minorities be up in the workforce, be politicians, senators, judges (P16, F, 18, DACA).

- b. In-person applications or name-blind applications

Removing names from job applications can to circumvent name-based racial/ethnic/cultural discrimination

- “...making job interviews easier. Instead of filling out an online application, having in-store applications, so they can see who you really are” (H34, M, 19, DACA).
- “If your application is online, they look at your background and where are you from and your name. In their head they see you a certain way so they have stereotypes and it's harder to get a call from them (...). Versus if you go and apply in person” (E31, F, 19, DACA).

Apparently, UK conservative party leader David Cameron is persuading employers and universities to make job application name-blind as a strategy to avoid (unconscious) bias (Cameron, 2015).

- c. Removing the 'race-ethnicity' box from job applications

Similarly to name-blind applications, some participants would like to see the race/ethnicity question removed from applications to prevent racial bias in hiring. Besides the potential of racial bias, many people feel like the options do not represent them or they do not ‘fit’ into any of the categories. Complexities and shifting interpretations of people’s identities have evolved beyond current categorizations.

- "I would rather they wouldn’t ask about one’s race. (...) or having to put ethnicity, not having to label yourself into a certain category of a person would be really helpful because you don’t get judged right away" (D4, M, 16, DACA).
- "I don’t feel like they should include that [race box on a job application] because that's how they make judgments really fast" (H34, M, 19, DACA).
- "...let’s say on the job application it says Hispanic or stuff like that, I feel like that shouldn’t really be something important. It’s about what the person has experienced" (J10, F, 16, PR).

d. Supporting immigrant parents

Support can be in the form of addressing their immigration status (i.e. offering pathways to legalization), or providing access to information, resources, and jobs.

Participants emphasize a family or two-generation approach because parents influence their children’s wellbeing and vice versa. Excluding parents (e.g. from schools and other institutions) is detrimental to their children and comprehensive immigration reform must take into account undocumented adults as well as children. Informed and documented parents will better be able to assist their children.

- "...if parents have more information they could just motivate their students to keep going to school or at least help them out a little bit more through the resources available" (A1, M, 21, PR).
- "...if you help the parents you can help the youth, because if you help the parents and parents aren't going to be up to their neck in debt . . . if the parents move up, then everyone's social economical . . . you kind of just move up a class. You go from lower to middle and once you do that jump, then the youth have more opportunities" (B2, M, 17, DACA).
- "We have been working for immigration reform with the pathway to citizenship but a lot of our families just want something to feel secured. And so even if we could get that for our families and work ahead, that would be great" (E31, F, 19, DACA).
- "...it is a really sad story to say we're gonna give all the youth relief and their parents are going to have to suffer through it and they don't realize that, it's sad to say but eventually it's going to be a burden on us, because what are we going to do with them? We can't leave them to just be there and die. You have to help them out" (Q17, M, 16, undoc).
- "...residency, or at least something that will let them stay here with their families" (Z26, F, 16, DACA).

Participants also recommend getting immigrant parents more involved in schools, which involves schools building trust with parents.

Preventing deportations would also keep families together and prevent US-born children ending up in foster care:

- “If we just made families legal there wouldn’t be children in foster homes because their parents were sent away. There would be a more peaceful country instead of having all family chaos in courts. (...) prevent deportation so we could all live in peace and anybody would feel welcome when coming into the United States. No one would be discriminated or be banned” (T20, F, 18, DACA).

The centrality of family in participants’ everyday life, as illustrated in their journals and mental maps, also emphasizes that immigration reform will only be sufficient if it is comprehensive and includes all members of the family, not only the children.

Allowing undocumented individuals to obtain a driver’s license would benefit children with undocumented parents because their parents would no longer be at risk of deportation by driving. Improved spatial mobility for the family can help children and youth take advantage of opportunities (employment, sports, volunteering, etc.).

Moreover, “while citizenship dictates the level of opportunity available to a student, individuals with differing status are also often raised in the same household by the same parents.” (Flores and Oseguera, 2011, p.76). In other words, US-citizen children with undocumented parents and siblings (mixed-status families) suffer from some of the same disadvantages as their undocumented or DACAmented peers.

When asked to identify strategies that could be used to develop a program for Latino youth that helps them 1) stay in school; 2) develop positive social and family roles; and 3) bridge American and Latino cultures, 103 youth (94% Hispanic) and 130 adults (88% Hispanic) identified the following areas using cluster mapping:

1) Help youth stay in school through youth development, college and career planning, academic sustainment, and future development techniques;

2) Develop positive role models through family development, parent development, and mentoring;

3) Bridge culture through community involvement, school management, and cultural enlightenment (Ridings et al, 2010).

I point out these results for several reasons. First, like my study, this is an example of how youth can be involved in shaping programs that influence their lives. Second, the clusters identified by the participants overlap with the suggestions I gathered from my youth participants, e.g. providing information about college and career, mentoring, and supporting youth by involving and educating their parents. By corroborating my findings with other research, their validity is enhanced. In addition, even though I had different angles and prompts than Ridings and colleagues did, the fact that we elucidated similar youth responses suggests that the recommended strategies touch upon a wide range of goals. In other words, information sessions for parents can improve parent development and support family cohesion as well as improve college and career trajectories of their children, which can, in turn, lead to improved economic, and mental and physical health outcomes down the line.

Up to this point, I have mostly covered ideas rather than strategies to achieve improved labor market access and opportunities for 1.5-generation Hispanic immigrant youth. I now transition into the sections of this chapter that are more focused on action.

#### e. Advocacy

Advocacy plays a central role in promoting labor market inclusion and integration for 1.5-generation Hispanic immigrant youth. Policy makers and the general public need to be better informed about their foreign-born and minority counterparts and pressed to

make more inclusive decisions. Social media, video, marches, and talking to people are ways to do this. Participants offer ideas on what this could entail:

- "I would set up a small video that would show how illegal immigrants get to America and what they expect from this country verses what they had in theirs. (...) so you would have a perspective on what it is to be an illegal immigrant" (T20, F, 18, DACA).
- "...more activism, I guess, yeah, that would be really good. You know, more petitions, more marches. Showing the leaders basically that there is a Hispanic youth part of it, not just older immigrants, it shows that the young people they care about it too" (H8, F, 16, DACA).
- "The more people know about their surroundings, the more they are accepting. But if they don't really know, they will be more ignorant about things, about other people" (J10, F, 16, PR).
- "...we'd have to have a demonstration of who we really are to change people's minds. Because everything is basically visual, what people see, so I think if they get to understand the struggles people go through, it would change people's minds. I think that's the only way to get across. Because through an argument, you don't really get your point across" (S19, M, 18, DACA).

For those without permanent legal status, "social movement efforts around immigrant rights, labor rights, and education justice may challenge structural inequalities that constrain the successful incorporation of segments of this population." (Terriquez, 2014, p.406).

The case of the North Carolina in-state tuition bill that did not pass offers lessons

in advocacy and its challenges. The House Bill 1183, also known as Access to Higher Education and A Better Economic Future, would have made it possible for undocumented students to pay in-state tuition at state colleges and universities, provided they met the other in-state tuition eligibility criteria. The bill was pushed by immigrant rights organizations (mainly El Pueblo) and supported by former North Carolina Governor Jim Hunt and Democratic representative Rick Glazier. “Supporters also estimated that the bill would benefit between 484 and 1,345 students and would not necessitate additional state funding” (Sanders (2010, p. 118). However, it received a lot of backlash, mainly from Americans for Legal Immigration and NC Listen, claiming state funds should not be used for undocumented migrants and that passing the bill would take funds and chances away from citizens. This rhetoric was spread on radio talk shows. “By using conservative talk radio programs, the opposing organizations effectively spread their message to an audience that extended beyond their base of support, Sanders (2010, p. 118) wrote. The bill became so controversial that political supporters and co-sponsors started to remove their names. Reflecting on this example, one legislator said, “I have found that if you don’t work an issue really well before you introduce a bill that may be controversial, you’re sort of dead in the water because this information gets out there really fast.” (Sanders, 2010, p. 122). Immigrant advocates ended up responding to criticism and negative press rather than making their statement and getting the word out beforehand. There could also have been more collaboration between organizations in the state. Sanders (2010, p.122) suggests that a reason why the in-state tuition policy did pass in Kansas is because “[t]he bill’s supporters successfully stressed the low costs associated



with the proposal, access and opportunity for Kansas's children, and the long-term economic benefits of an educated citizenry.”

f. Removing ‘no legal status’ from DACA driver licenses

As formerly illustrated, the demarcations on DACAmented youth's current North Carolina driver's licenses perpetuates stigma and ‘outs’ them in unnecessary ways and settings. There is no practical reason to make such distinctions in their licenses.

- "The only thing I didn't like about the state policies is that now, I believe my license is going to say ‘no legal status,’ which, when I first got it, my license doesn't say anything on it" (R18, F, 21, DACA).

g. Health care for everyone

People cannot work, study and pursue their dreams if they are not physically and mentally healthy. Without access to (primary) care, people tend to wait too long to seek care and they get more ill, resulting in higher human and economic costs.

- “Some sort of health care probably. Because, for example, for lower income families, if students or youth my age don't....students that aren't citizens don't qualify for Medicaid, or residents don't qualify for Medicaid and that's definitely a disadvantage when we are trying to receive health care, like going to get our physicals, we actually have to pay or get insurance or whatnot. And if there is a health care system for youth or families like mine, that would help us” (C3, F, 17, DACA).

h. More diverse representations of Latinos in the media

How and if minorities are represented in the news, TV shows and movies, for instance, matters for the way they are viewed by mainstream society and for the ways in which Latinos see themselves.

- "I think a reason why people don't respect other cultures or other ethnicities is because you don't see it in the media" (P16, F, 18, DACA).

i. Community, trust building (between different groups)

Americans feel increasingly socially isolated, neighborhoods are still segregated, and politics have never been more polarized. Technologies and our physical environment allow us to connect and reach one another but also have the opposite effect of disconnecting us from others, particularly those who are not like us (in terms of race/ethnicity, SES, religion, culture, and political orientation, for instance). One way to build community and trust is by organizing local events:

- "I want to have a community get together, where people can really know who is your neighbor and how are they like you. I feel like you can't really tell people, you can show it. [for example] a cook-out. White tents, home cooking. We're all cooking and trying different stuff and just talking" (F6, F, 19, TPS).

Collaborations and partnerships can be among different immigrant groups, minority groups and between Whites and minorities, and US- and foreign-born people.

Creating spaces in which people from different backgrounds can interact and discuss social issues is essential in cultivating these connections and cross-cultural understandings. This does not happen enough; the way are cities are physically built and our social and work circles are constructed typically prevents such interactions.

Consequently, most people remain in their comfort zone and engage only with people like

them. To a certain extent, this is human nature, but I believe that it is also our nature to be social and seek out new experiences. By changing the way our cities are laid-out (e.g. mixed-income, higher-density living with sidewalks, bike lanes, and ample public transit), we increase our exposure to others. By providing equal access to all people for loans, housing, higher education, and jobs, the spaces in which we live, work, study, and play will become less segregated. It is naïve to assume that one of these solutions would instantly result in world peace, but we can see examples around the world of the benefits such changes bring.

j. More clarity about policies

As results demonstrate, employers need to be better informed about policy changes such as DACA. We also need to make reliable information about less common visas such as TPS and the U visa easier to find. Currently, information about what immigrant youth do or do not qualify for based on their status is difficult to encounter. Internet sources offer conflicting information and some laws are federally determined whereas others are set at the state level.

Though findings show that various factors are at play, for non-citizen youth the policy context guides, frames, and oftentimes limits their labor market access and experiences. Beyond that, it shapes their identity; how others view them and how they view themselves. Consequently, policy change and education about these policies influences not only job market inclusion or exclusion but also broader life experiences and wellbeing of immigrant youth.

## 9.4 Making Change Happen

Participants also provided insights into how to implement these recommendations and promote social change (Table 13).

### a. Understand and recognize the issues at stake

We must have a comprehensive understanding of social issues in order to successfully address them. “I have heard that the younger people think 'things are going to get better' but if you don't accept that things are happening and if you don't do anything about it then things aren't going to get better” (E31, F, 19, DACA), one participant stated. Research such as this can improve our knowledge of challenges as well as the assets youth have to offer.

### b. One-on-one personal transformations

One participant with extensive advocacy involvement explains from her experience motivating other youth and convincing policy makers that: “It takes time, but I realize from talking to people, if you talk to people one-on-one you make a connection and it's easier to do smaller groups because you make connections with them, versus going to a big crowd and saying 'all of y'all come'. Because, once you make that connection, people are more willing and more open to going to things and seeing how is this going to help me. And then that person will go and tell someone else and it benefits because they pass the word on. It is time consuming but unless...if you don't have a connection, it's going to make things harder. Even if it's five people you can get together and make a connection with. Then those five people go and talk to other people. It helps to do that” (E31, F, 19, DACA).

Latino youth across the nation are speaking up and sharing their story. They want

people to know they are interested in being part of a two-way process where they gain more rights but they also give back to society: "We have to give them back something. We can't expect them to give us something without giving them something back so I feel like the more we give back and forth, the more they will start accepting us and people that don't like, that are anti-immigrant, they don't know our story. I feel like if I told people my story, they would be like: okay, it's not your fault" (U21, F, 20, DACA).

These personal transformations also need to occur within youth themselves. Being a trailblazer or fighting challenges to upward mobility can be tiresome. Youth have to invest in themselves in order to grow into the leaders they wish to be and help make advances for the group: "I want to help people understand they can make changes, empower people. Of course I have to help myself first" (F32, M, 21, DACA).

c. Start young

Participants overwhelmingly agree that initiatives need to start in elementary school and middle school, because by the time youth reach high school, it is difficult to turn trajectories around: "[start these programs in] elementary because a lot of kids, I came small in elementary and even since I came I thought: I'm never gonna get a job here" (B2, M, 16, undoc). Initiatives would be appropriate to the age group, for instance college preparations would not occur until high school, but in elementary and middle schools teachers and administrators can celebrate multi-culturalism, create spaces for racial/ethnic/cultural identity development, build self-confidence, and set high expectations of all students. One of the ways to make minority and immigrant students feel welcome and a sense of belonging is by having them and their heritages reflected in curricula: "it starts with the primary school, secondary school, upper level, they need to

be more open to educating history classes in school. Even the world history classes don't teach about... (...) They miss a lot! It's very White-centric, that American aspect. You don't see the African-American, you don't see the Latino, you don't see the immigrant. You see the Andrew Jackson, George W. Bush (...) You see the founding fathers, but you don't see the women and the suffragists, that feminism is still active. They teach it like it's dead. The Civil Rights Movement is not . . . they teach it as an apology, rather than . . . and that it's over, rather than teaching that it's still progressing" (G7, F, 21, PR).

Other reasons to start these initiatives for social change for children and teens are that: a) today's younger generation are the most diverse in US history so there are opportunities there to work across difference and people will need these skills more than every; b) younger people tend to be more open-minded and accepting of difference and change than older generations. As the baby boomers retire, a younger and more diverse workforce is shifting the way we do and think about work. As one participant describes: "the youth is changing, the newer generation is changing. There are other people that really need to see it because I think that now that people, employers and CEOs, grew up in communities with White people and went to school with White people and nowadays we go with everybody, it's Asians, Hispanics, African Americans. So we really get to meet people and see how they are. I think that is helping out but people in charge right now, basically people who run the country, they don't have the same...they haven't been exposed to stuff like that" (S19, M, 18, DACA).

#### d. Strategic argumentation

In order to change policies, politicians and the general public will have to shift the way they think about immigration and immigrants. Convincing those adhering to anti-

immigrant views to change is challenging to say the least. There are, however, strategic arguments one can make to educate others about the benefits and opportunities of immigration. For example: “people can sympathize, empathize more with children than saying 'this person is not getting equal treatment at a restaurant' where you have the separate but equal policies. Versus 'this poor child is not getting the best education'. So we can definitely start these legislative changes with students first, children first, because that is how - as we passed Brown vs. the Board of Education - that's the best way to get social changes. Use the children, haha” (F32, M, 21, DACA). This is arguably how DACA got passed.

Although the argument that the 1.5 generation came to the US too young to realize they were overstepping geopolitical boundaries can help convince policy makers to grant this group amnesty, it also positions their parent(s) as the ones to blame. Even though some youth may struggle with their parents’ decision to bring them to the US when they realize the impacts of their “illegality”, they overwhelmingly understand the constraints their parents were under and that their parents made the decision that was in their best interest with the options that were afforded to them. Presenting children as innocent but parents as criminals may have contributed to the backlash on the 2014 DAPA program.

Another form of strategic argumentation is highlighting the taxes immigrants pay (including undocumented migrants, counter to popular belief) and the essential work they perform. Underlining how immigrant workers are the ‘invisible’ workforce that form the backbone of our economy can raise awareness about migrants’ importance among people who are not personally exposed to migrants. Moreover, immigration policy impacts

everyone, not solely immigrants, because if immigrants and their families are better off, so is our society as a whole. That said, dangers lurk in solely focusing on the economic contributions of migrants or how migrants benefit US-born Whites: namely, by narrowing migrants' value down to what they produce and consume, we fall in a dehumanizing, capitalist trap that does not recognize people as holistic, sentient beings. Furthermore, such reasoning fails to break down racial and citizenship hierarchies that allow for discrimination and exploitation.

In short, there are strategic ways to present migration to gain wider support for immigrant-friendly policies and programs, yet we must take into account that social change is a broader, more long-term process and that equality is not reached in one step. Example: in-state tuition: citing studies that demonstrate it has worked in other states. Being prepared to deal with the controversy and backlash. Using talk radio and other media to get the word out (Sanders, 2010).

e. Peaceful protests and advocacy

"I don't think you can solve things by force or by yelling. I think the best way to solving things is by peace or by understanding the way they think" (I9, M, 16, PR). Latino immigrant youth have opportunities to learn from other human rights groups, for instance LGBTQ and civil rights movements: "I'm going to use the African American experience here, the Black experience. It wasn't a straight line of progression, it has been ups and downs, ups and downs. (...) But at the same time it is slowly going up. And I see the same thing here, I can foresee the same thing happening here. We have some moments of great progressions and moments of going backwards. But the overall trend will be toward positive changes. Just because you are seeing signs of going backwards,



doesn't mean we are going backwards, as an overall progression, it just means we need to keep moving forward. It's not going to be all friendly from now on, we are going to have some backlashes in the future, and then some backlashes" (F32, M, 21, DACA).

f. Policy change...and beyond

DACA gives short-term access to employment, but it is not a long-term, comprehensive solution, both in terms of its extent (what it covers) and its length (how long it removes barriers). A common perception that we simply need to fix the policy or push for comprehensive immigration reform. Though this policy change is important in enhancing job access, this research demonstrates it is only a partial solution.

DACAmented youth face barrier after barrier and even with in-state tuition they run into accreditation issues down the road, such as going to med school or law school and not being able to get certified. At the core, there are other fundamental factors driving socio-spatial exclusion that need to be addressed, as highlighted by the fact that Permanent Residents and US citizens are running into similar obstacles. Once you address one, another one runs to the surface. Socio-spatial inclusion of 1.5-generation Hispanic immigrant youth is therefore not only about status and about citizenship, it is about youth, it is about race/ethnicity, and it is about networks and resources and a comprehensive plan is required.

When we think about what needs to happen to improve youth work access and how social change occurs, listening to youth is not only a smart thing to do – as the extensive list of recommendations presented here demonstrates – it is also morally correct. This idea connects back to the foundations and practices of community-based participatory and action research approaches (e.g. Dick, 2001; Brydon-Miller et al, 2003;

Huang, 2010; Pain, 2003; Reason and Bradbury, 2001; Mason, 2015; Cahill, 2007). It also reinforces my case to conduct research *with* rather than *about* Hispanics youth and their labor market experiences in new and non-traditional ways.

Table 13: Overview of ideas for change and their operationalization based on youth suggestions

<b>Avenues for change</b>	<b>Operationalization</b>
Information about education and career	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Information sessions at schools, community organizations, and apartment complexes</li> <li>- Start reaching people when they are young (in elementary and middle school)</li> </ul>
Mentorship and role models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expand existing mentoring programs and start new ones at schools and through local organizations and companies</li> </ul>
Job training and connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Opportunities to connect with Latino professionals in Charlotte</li> <li>- Workshops, certifications, trainings beyond four-year college – can be through community college, company, local organization, etc.</li> </ul>
Hispanic student organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- At middle and high schools, college and universities</li> <li>- Identify teacher/staff support</li> <li>- Build skills (leadership, organization, communication, e.g.), ethnic/cultural identity, social support, empowerment</li> <li>- Educating/serving the school or broader community</li> </ul>
Higher education scholarships for everybody	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strategic argumentation - how helping non-citizen youth gain access to higher education can help us all</li> </ul>
Policy changes, e.g. in-state tuition, a pathway to citizenship, and opportunities to gain professional licenses, to serve in the military, and to travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Highlight examples of diverse ways in which non-citizen youth are contributing to society</li> <li>- Strategic argumentation - Calculating (potential) economic burden vs. contributions of DACA, DAPA, in-state tuition, citizenship. Start with youth and children.</li> <li>- Peaceful protests and advocacy</li> </ul>
More opportunities to show people what we are capable of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Give Latino/a youth a chance in professional settings to demonstrate their potential and accumulate work experiences they otherwise may not have access to</li> </ul>

Table 13: (continued)

Avenues for change	Operationalization
In-person applications or name-blind applications. Removing the 'race-ethnicity' box from job applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prevent employer/reviewer from seeing the candidate's name and race when reviewing their application to avoid explicit or implicit bias.</li> <li>- Opportunities for job candidates to present themselves other than solely submitting a brief online application (which may not allow for the full range of skills, experiences, and character traits to show)</li> </ul>
Supporting immigrant parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Information sessions, English classes, etc. for parents at local organizations and schools to enhance their skills, improve their job options, learn how to better support their child, etc.</li> <li>- A legal status for undocumented parents that allows them to work and drive</li> </ul>
Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recognize the issues at stake – educating self and others</li> <li>- Strategic argumentation – select arguments based on your 'target audience'</li> <li>- Non-violent communication, dialogue to promote mutual understanding. Petitions, marches, lobbying.</li> <li>- Personal transformations of youth themselves, policy makers, voters, etc. – Engaging people one-on-one so they can find ways to relate to the issues and identify what they personally can do to help</li> </ul>
Removing 'no legal status' from DACA NC driver licenses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Demonstrate the lack of purpose of this information displayed on the front of the license and how it contributes to further stigmatization and isolation of DACAmented youth.</li> </ul>
More diverse representations of Latinos in the media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hiring more Latinos/as and showing non-stereotypical, multi-dimensional representations of Latinos/as in books, TV, online, etc.</li> </ul>
Community, trust building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Block or neighborhood-level gatherings, e.g. cookout, potluck.</li> <li>- Uniting around common interests</li> </ul>
More clarity about policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Easy-to-locate, reliable resources (e.g. website, flyers) for youth and their families, and employers, with up-to-date information regarding labor and immigration policies, plus opportunities to ask questions</li> </ul>

Interestingly, the recommendations offered by participating youth focused on individual, program and policy changes (Table 13) and less on the role of local-level institutions such as the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce and the Latin American

Chamber of Commerce of Charlotte. There are several hypotheses for this absence. There may be a lack of outreach between Latino youth and local institutions/businesses, resulting in a lack of awareness about their presence and what they do. Making these connections can link youth to mentors, internships, jobs, and information and also help local institutions tap into and nurture the potential of Latino youth. Youth may be unaware of organizations such as the Chambers of Commerce because they are geographically dispersed in different neighborhoods (the Chambers being downtown, for instance, while youth are living in the suburbs), and they may target a different clientele (higher income, more professional-sector businesses). This ties into the diversity of the Latin American community; Latinos come from many countries, educational backgrounds, and income levels and they do not necessarily identify with one another. Furthermore, the disconnect youth have with local institutions could also be a function of Charlotte being a new gateway in which local-level structures of support have not yet fully been established.

## CHAPTER 10: CHARLOTTE/"NEW SOUTH" CONTEXT

This chapter places study results in the context of the "New South." Overall, I position my work within the broader literature across the US, because I believe in its general applicability. All youth must navigate their labor market entry in a post-recession economy where higher education degrees matter more than ever but still do not guarantee a middle-class job. Many of the policies and Latino youth experiences portrayed in this dissertation resonate outside Charlotte and North Carolina, as references to other case studies have demonstrated. However, there are place-based nuances that should be acknowledged. Here, I focus on the specific context and opportunities in the US South.

### 10.1 What is the "New South"?

The "New South" is characterized by rapid demographic changes that have unfolded over the past 20-25 years. Globalization, industrial shifts, and policy changes have drawn documented and undocumented Latinos in increasing numbers to Southern states, such as North Carolina. Reasons for migration include economic growth, legislative changes, demand for low-wage jobs, and network effects. At the same time, Latinos have been pushed away from their home countries and other places in the US like California and Texas because of economic downturn, increasing hostility, political volatility, and labor market saturation (Smith and Furuseth, 2006; Odem and Lacy, 2009).

The influence of larger, structural forces should also be mentioned. The global economic crisis, along with recent neo-liberal reforms in the Mexican economy and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), has left many Mexicans unemployed,

especially those in rural areas (Torres et al., 2008). Many scholars also point toward the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) as having a significant influence in changing dispersion and settlement patterns of immigrants, particularly from Mexico. Although the IRCA aimed to prevent the hiring of undocumented immigrants and increase border enforcement, the act also granted amnesty to unauthorized immigrants who entered the US prior to January 1, 1982, allowing them to move freely within the country. These new regulations pushed and pulled Latino immigrants out of previous settlement regions into the US South (Torres et al., 2008; Barcus, 2008; Smith and Furuseth, 2008; Walcott and Murphy, 2008; Frazier and Reisinger, 2008).

Eleven of the eighteen new Latino destinations lie in the US South, with three of the “hypergrowth” metros in North Carolina: Charlotte, Greensboro, and Raleigh-Durham (Suro and Singer, 2001). These destinations experienced Latino growth rates of over 800% between 1980 and 2000 and were among the pre-emerging immigrant gateways, meaning immigrant influx did not start until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Smith and Furuseth, 2006; Singer, 2004). These pre-emerging gateways tend to attract Latinos from Central America and Mexico who are poorer and less educated than the native-born population, and have relatively low English proficiency and US citizenship rates (Singer, 2004). This brings new challenges to the receiving communities and also makes it harder for recent arrivals to assimilate.

Within the US South, immigrants are not only moving to urban centers as traditional migration theories suggest but also to rural counties to work in, e.g. agriculture and poultry plants. There are also Latinos that moved first to rural areas in the South and made a secondary move to an urban area in the region. Within the metropolitan areas,

there are new settlement patterns as well. By 2000, 54% of Latinos in the US lived in suburban areas and 74% of Latino growth 1990-2000 occurred in neighborhoods where Latinos were the minority (Suro and Singer 2002; Smith and Furuseth 2006). These two trends are reflective of pre-emerging immigrant gateway growth.

Despite growing Latino communities, a new form of isolation within urban and suburban environments is occurring. As a result of policy changes and growing hostility of the host society, there is an increased fear among Latinos. As Smith and Furuseth (2008, p. 301) note: "Charlotte is increasingly hostile and unwelcoming for Hispanics, particularly those who are newly arrived, foreign-born, and within formal documentation." Other studies have pointed out stigmatization of poverty areas and racial or ethnic groups by the media, police, educators, and the public, as well as tension within minority groups: "Ethnically mixed neighborhoods can become sites of tension, white flight, and/or establishments of 'parallel lives'" (Smith and Ley, 2008; Bailey et al., 2002; Phillips, 2006, p. 31). Moreover, implementation of the 287 (g) policies that allows trained local authorities to assist federal immigration agencies in carrying out immigration enforcement have "created a climate of racial profiling and community insecurity" in communities across North Carolina (IPC 2010). Mecklenburg County heavily shaped the program and has been cited as a model as 287(g) was enforced in the Southeast between 2006 and 2008 (Capps et al., 2011; Mathema, 2013). Eroded trust has been detrimental to both Latinos and the police because it means Latinos are less likely to report crimes or cases of exploitation. Thus, public and political shifts have created a marginalized Latino community that is often afraid to be in public space. This is particularly the case for undocumented Latinos, where unemployment, isolation, legal

victimization, and fear of deportation put a lot of stress on Latino communities.

Latino immigration to the US South and specifically North Carolina has challenged some of the existing and accepted theories on migration because settlement contexts and patterns are different than previously seen. In these new destinations, Latino immigrants are also reshaping regional identities. At the same time, these contexts and patterns are continuously being shaped by the volatile economic and political situation and changing host society perceptions toward immigrants. “Growing ethnic diversity has gone hand-in-hand with the demographic and economic revitalization of many places, but also has brought new challenges - both for the new immigrants themselves (e.g., discrimination and acceptance) and for the local residents” (Lichter and Johnson, 2009, p.515) This is only expected to continue as the 1.5 and second-generation re-shape the role of Latinos in the US. We see a 1.5 and second-generation who have witnessed their parents’ struggle and do not accept going through the same adversity and discrimination. They have the English skills and – in the case of citizens – voting rights to empower them. The large and growing Latino youth population provides an opportunity for the US, but whether stagnation in terms of socioeconomic status can be prevented depends on the political and public will to provide opportunities for them to partake in higher education and job training.

The rapid demographic changes in the South have raised new research questions that this study addresses. For instance, in *Changing politics of race and region*, Winders (2005) asks for more work that contextualizes Latinos in the South in relation to different US cities and the historical geographies of race and ethnicity in southern cities. Landale and colleagues (2008) call for more research on Hispanic mixed-status families and



intergenerational mobility in non-traditional regions. Similarly, Lichter and Johnson (2009, p.516) question “whether these new patterns of Hispanic geographic mobility have occurred simultaneously with upward social mobility. Will employment opportunities in new destinations provide avenues for earnings mobility and sever the intergenerational linkages that often bind the fate of parents to those of their children? Or, will new Hispanic destinations become collecting grounds for disadvantaged minority populations and reinforce current patterns of racial and ethnic inequality in America?” My work addresses these demands by positioning this case study within the city, state, and federal socio-political context. Since many participants also come from mixed-status families, we gain further insight into generational and family dynamics in such households. Furthermore, findings related to upward mobility and integration of 1.5-generation Latino youth supplement what we already know about first-generation migrants’ trajectories. My results suggest that employment opportunities in new destinations do provide avenues for intergenerational geographic, social and economic mobility but factors of socio-spatial inclusion (lack of permanent legal status and discrimination, e.g.) need to be addressed in order to take full advantage of these opportunities. Since youth trajectories are still unfolding, further research on this topic is needed.

## 10.2 The Myth of the New South

The concept of the "New South" is a myth because:

- a. We can no longer – if it were ever appropriate – use the ‘newness’ as an excuse to not having enough resources and support for immigrant families.
- b. Diversifying demographics in the US South does not mean discrimination is history and people are more open-minded.

The demographic changes in the South are no longer new. In terms of gateway cities, the categorization of Charlotte has shifted from a pre-emerging to emerging gateway (Singer, 2015) which enforces the problematization of thinking of demographic change in the South as 'new.' In fact, Weise (2012) claims Latino migration to the South is not a new phenomenon because Mexicans and Mexican Americans worked in the South during the 1910-1930s and Latin Americans were recruited to work in the post-Civil War South because African Americans rejected jobs in the Southern agricultural industry or "white farmers rejected their black laborers" (p.48). When Latinos migrated (directly from Latin America or from other places in the US) to the South in the 1990s (some arrived earlier but numbers more rapidly increased in the 1990s), they followed a long tradition of Latinos seeking upward mobility. Therefore, the "New South" is a product "of the scholarly and popular imaginations rather than the historical record" (p.42). What has been "nuevo," however, is a significant anti-immigrant movement (which is not uniform across the region) and the urban and rural visibility of Latinos.

Immigrants have settled throughout the region, started business, grown roots, and are raising children who consider themselves 'American.' Latinos and other immigrant groups now call the South home and they are here to stay – and in some cases have been here longer than other US born internal migrants. Ongoing demographic shifts, with increasing numbers of children of immigrants, are happening, whether we are receptive to demographic shifts or not. The problem is that we are still reacting and responding as if they are new. Our states and cities are a step behind in recognizing that Latinos are part of our communities and should act accordingly in terms of providing the services and resources to promote integration.

That said, diversifying demographics - becoming more racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse – does not mean it is welcomed or coming without challenges. Moving from a racial context that was framed largely by the Black-White divide, the “hypergrowth” of Latinos in the region has impacted this historical binary paradigm of race (e.g. Oboler, 2012; Winders, 2005, Yancey, 2003). The book *Being brown in Dixie: race, ethnicity, and Latino immigration in the new South* (edited by Lippard and Gallagher, 2011) explores these shifting complexities of race and race relations in the changing South. In one of the chapters, Jackson (2011) points out that the “recurring theme in the emerging scholarship on the southern response to contemporary immigration is the hostility between African Americans and Latino immigrants” (p. 26). The author explains how ‘vertical racism,’ racism of a dominant powerful group toward a group with significantly less power, differs from ‘horizontal racism’ or ‘cross-racial hostility’ in that one group does not have control over the resources of the other group. Still, the latter can impact people’s use of public spaces and “works to divert our attention from the influence of powerful majority groups” (p. 32). In addition, the “myth of the New South” is that “things are better now” (p. 27), that the “New South” is a multicultural, multi-racial place. However, it has not discarded the burden of racial prejudice; racism and segregation continues. My study exemplifies this point.

Racial histories prior to receiving immigrants can help understand reactions from ‘natives’ towards foreigners (McConnell, 2011). Considering the history of African Americans in the US South, and remaining racial tensions, we may expect heightened negative responses towards Latino immigrants in this part of the country. Marrow (2011), explains how the American racial binary of White and non-White remains strong in the

South. Accordingly, ‘brown’ people end up falling into the ‘non-White’ category (even though many are White by race) and get treated as second-class residents. From 129 semi-structure interviews, many Hispanic respondents’ experiences of discrimination were based on ‘foreignness’, citizenship or ‘illegality,’ and how these factors trumped race or skin color. Racial inferiority is assumed by White Americans (vertical) and citizenship inferiority is presumed by US-born Whites and Blacks (vertical and horizontal). Though, according to my respondents, most of the culprits are White, other scholars have documented how nonracial discrimination is greater by Blacks than Whites, for instance by being ignored when speaking English due to their accent or “foreign” dress (Marrow, 2011). Marrow’s study of Hispanic newcomers in Eastern North Carolina showed that Black Americans were more socially exclusionary and hostile towards Hispanics than White Americans. Possible reasons for this are the differential interactions Hispanic immigrants have with African Americans and Whites. Due to segregation in schools, neighborhoods, and work places, minorities are more likely to interact in these settings, where resources and spaces are often scarce and competition, rather than collaboration, are triggered. That said, there were also instances where Hispanic newcomers expected Whites to be more open-minded, but their actual encounters with Whites in Eastern North Carolina displayed the opposite. As some participants of my study pointed in “it all depends on the person and whether they are racist or not.” Though that is true to a certain extent, this view denies larger trends of inter-group tensions, the systematic exclusion of Hispanic immigrants from certain spaces or opportunities, and the structural and institutional racism that – though created by people - cannot be pinpointed directly to one individual.

Within current US racial constructions, Hispanic or Latino/a is an ethnicity but not a race, often confusingly for people from Latin America who skip the 'race' question in demographic surveys or respond 'other' (Hitlin et al, 2007). Many Latinos in the US classify as 'White' racially, even though they are treated differently from non-Hispanic Whites. Racial elasticity (Akom, 2008) allows them to be added to this "white racial frame" (Feagin and Cobas, 2008). African Americans, however, will always be 'Black', never 'White.' This categorization provides insight into how racial categories are constructed and reconstructed, which ultimately illustrates the way we view people of different races. How this 'racial order' will shift and what the implications are for African Americans and Black immigrants is still unfolding (Lippard and Gallagher, 2011).

Still, the concept of intersectionality expresses that every person has a multi-faceted identity, including race, gender, sex, sexual orientation, class, nationality, religion, age, etc. These identities are fluid and interact with each other (e.g. Delgado and Stefancic, 2012; Bell, 1995). Despite often being 'White,' Latinos are still otherized due to their skin color, country of origin, immigration status, last names, and/or accent, as exemplified in this paper. For instance, the influence of "foreignness," as articulated by Marrow (2011), ties back to my interviewees' comments regarding the racialization of documentation status and "illegality"; 'Hispanic-looking' features may be equated with being undocumented, and discussions about the undocumented population in the US are associated with Latinos. However, we know that most Latinos are documented and other racial/ethnic groups may also be undocumented. Such generalizations hurt Hispanics and keeps society misinformed. "Illegal immigration" and its associated social problems are socially constructed and reinforced concepts (Bohan and MacPherson, 2011).

Presently in the US, co-occurring and sometimes conflicting processes of place-making are playing out at the neighborhood level all the way up to broader national-scale discussions about who is/are American – and who are not – and what that means for power, resource allocation, and national identity. “Being brown in Dixie” (Lippard and Gallagher, 2011) is equated with being ‘not from here’ and therefore ‘not belonging.’ As my results show, even youth who came to the US when they were babies and toddlers, as well as their US-born siblings, may face rejection by the ‘traditional’ Southern population. In response, Hispanics may “pass as White,” or attempt to, and position themselves in contrast to Blacks in order to be accepted by Whites, enhance their chances for upward mobility, or express their own inherent racial biases.

### 10.3 How the Myth of the New South and Geographic/Regional Context come into Play in this Dissertation: Receptivity and Inter-group Relations

#### a. Receptivity

Contexts of reception matter (Kasinitz et al, 2008). Scholars have repeatedly pointed out the anti-immigrant backlash in the South (e.g. Odem and Lacy, 2009), which particularly focuses on Latinos. The incorporation of newer groups is often guided by the racial history and context of receiving communities (Marrow, 2008; Flores and Oseguera, 2008). But with that said, receptivity is not uniform across time or space.

The examples of receptivity featured in this Charlotte-based case study are set in a certain geo-political and socio-cultural environment but do they vary. When comparing Charlotte to other places in the US, it seems to fall somewhere in the middle in terms of receptivity of Latino migrants and immigrant youth job opportunities. As the quotes below illustrate, California is widely idealized as good for Latino immigrants (even

though most participants had never been there), whereas Arizona is mentioned as an example of a negative, less welcoming context.

- "...there has been a lot more opportunities for Latinos in California. Probably because they have a larger population" (A27, F, 16, U visa).
- "Charlotte, it has a lot of problems as is, but I think some places have it tougher" (C29, F, 17, PR).
- "I like California, because they are more helpful to their Latin community" (D4, M, 16, DACA).
- "...it will be different definitely because in Arizona of course, because they can pull you over just based on the way you look and ask you for your papers or documentation or whatever. Yeah, it does make a difference where you live" (G33, M, 16, DACA).
- "I think California is probably one of the best... more Hispanic friendly places, but I'm not sure. I've never been there. I've only heard from people that live there" (J36, M, 21, DACA).
- "In California there's more opportunities and sometimes my parents tell me they kind of regret coming to North Carolina, even though it's a good state" (P16, F, 18, DACA).
- "I've been to Baltimore. Baltimore was okay. Chicago was very good. I think if I would've lived in Chicago, it's been very good. (...) There's so many people from so many different places there and they don't really mind. Everybody's culture is celebrated and accepted in a way that you don't really see in the South" (R18, F, 21, DACA).

- In "Arizona, I feel there's more racism there. I wouldn't like to be there" (V22, F, 16, DACA).

Considering the general lack of knowledge about policies, it seems surprising how similar participants' ideas were about immigrant-friendly and non-friendly states. Again, this may have to do with how these places are represented through media, because most youth have not visited California or Arizona, nor had their parents. Additionally, anti-immigrant legislation 287(g) was implemented in Mecklenburg County as one of the first states in the nation, yet this is not mentioned by respondents. California is considered a better place for Latinos because there are more migrants and more Latinos of multiple generations there; therefore, Latinos are represented throughout society, participants claim. California also passed the DREAM Act, allowing undocumented and DACAmented youth to pay in-state tuition. California, among other states, also has a much longer history of migration (from Latin America) than the South does, but growth rates were the highest in the Southeast over the past twenty years. The rapid demographic growth and shifts has shifted racial dynamics. Although most of the growth occurred pre-2010 (growth rates were highest in the time period 1990-2000 and have fallen since), much of the South is still feeling the (after-) effects of large demographic shifts over a relatively short period of time. There are many benefits of this diversification: immigrants have contributed to the economy, built homes and skyscrapers, started businesses, cultivated transnational ties, brought new ideas and cultures, and revitalized neighborhoods and towns, for instance. That said, there are also challenges, such as providing culturally and linguistically appropriate services and education. Compared to established gateway areas there is therefore still a limited infrastructure in schools,



community organizations, etc. to support growing numbers of immigrant children and youth (DeJonckheere et al, 2014; Waters & Jiménez, 2005).

- "...it's just new. I remember looking at the Latino scholarships and they were all in the West Coast so we do lack some infrastructure. But we can definitely start building something new here. So I don't see it as a positive or a negative, I just see it as new, as different" (F32, M, 21, DACA).
- "We stopped at a gas station with my dad in Raleigh and I had never seen someone look at me with so much hatred before. That was a shocker, I didn't understand. (...) Lately, I don't get it [discrimination] a lot. Maybe it's because of who I socialize with or how I behave or present myself" (F6, F, 19, TPS).

Time is not the only reason the city and region is still 'catching up': conservative politics and anti-immigrant rhetoric have restricted immigrant integration. Cities, which tend to attract more diverse and more liberal crowds, are viewed as more welcoming than rural areas:

- "Charlotte is more of a bigger city and I think if I lived in a smaller town of North Carolina, I do think it would be different because I would probably be more of a minority than I am in Charlotte. I probably would have more challenges in a different part of North Carolina" (A27, F, 16, U visa).
- "North Carolina, because I have traveled outside of Charlotte a lot, it's not a very good place for Hispanics (...) Huntersville area, which is not even far from Charlotte, is very redneck. Very still old southern. I get people coming into Target that won't even look at my face" (R18, F, 21, DACA).

In part due to residential segregation by race and class, many Southerners are still not used to seeing Hispanics or their exposure is so limited that stereotypes prevail (Harden et al, 2015). Maps of Mecklenburg County, for instance, show residential segregation of Latinos but also some dispersion. Exact patterns are also dependent on household income and country of origin. Participants have their own perceptions about how Charlotte is divided:

- "Latinos tend to live in a specific area of Charlotte and even in that specific area, whether it be different neighborhoods or different apartment complexes have people from different countries" (A27, F, 16, U visa).
- "...if I was in a rich area it would because I wouldn't be exposed to all this diversity of people" (J10, F, 16, PR).
- "Central is where all the Hispanics live and North Tryon is where all the black people live" (V22, F, 16, DACA).

As illustrated by participant quotes, (perceived) receptivity varies from regional differences to inter-state differences to local/neighborhood variations. In other words, the experience of receptivity differs across scales (McDaniel, 2013; Furuseth et al, 2015; Harden et al, 2015). Even though many participants have experienced times where they felt unwelcome, they generally feel good about living in Charlotte and feel connected to the city, even if they are open to moving elsewhere for work:

- "I like Charlotte, I like it a lot. If I stay in the United States, I'd stay in Charlotte. (...) I find Charlotte more calm and a place where you can triumph, you have more opportunity. It's a place where, later on in life, you'd want to raise a family, and live long" (D30, F, 17, DACA).

- "Charlotte doesn't have much to offer for me, at this moment. But, at the same time, I've really fallen in love with the diverse community we have here" (F6, F, 19, TPS).
- "I have never left Charlotte. I have always been here. I don't see why I should leave Charlotte just because I got older" (I35, M, 16, PR).
- "As much as Charlotte is pretty, it's not something I want to stay for the rest of my life" (C29, F, 17, PR).

The level of receptivity youth feel (which influences where they chose to live, work, and play) varies by neighborhood and this is in part a function of segregation – something the youth clearly articulated:

- "...it's really segregated...so, you know, on the Eastside there's not really any job opportunities so you have to go somewhere else but it would be harder to maybe get a job if you're Hispanic" (H34, M, 19, DACA).
- "If you go down to Ballentyne area or something you don't really see many Hispanic people but in this area they are everywhere" (U21, F, 20, DACA).
- "I think Charlotte is getting better and growing culturally, just depending exactly where in Charlotte" (J10, F, 16, PR).

The temporal and spatial context in which the youth are experiencing their lives is arguably shaping a “new” Latino identity. Youth ethnic identity is influenced by being in Charlotte/the South in the sense that they become 'American' in the Charlottean/Southern sense and their Latino/Hispanic identity is shaped by this context. The dynamics between groups of different races/ethnicities is also shaped by the Charlotte context; and, in turn, the mix and dynamics of different groups is influencing this new gateway city and the

'New South'. The relationship we have with place and the place identities we form are not unique to the South. However, based on the distinctive regional identity of, and demographic shifts in, the South, some may say a new 'type' of Latino identity has emerged: "I'm part of a new immigration wave because I'm different from the West Coast Latinos, I'm different from the Florida Latinos and from the Puerto Ricans in Mexico. So I'm a new category of Latinos" (F32, M, 21, DACA).

b. Inter-group dynamics in the work space

There are dynamics in the workforce and at the neighborhood-level between African Americans and Latinos that are going on largely outside the Caucasian awareness. The common narrative of receptivity in public and political spheres is framed in terms of how US-born non-Hispanic Whites view immigrants, but the social and spatial relationships that immigrants have with US-born minorities is also a part of the receptivity context and is different than those of Whites. Though White Americans still dominates mainstream culture and politics, other perspectives must be recognized, particularly in the context of a shifting racial/ethnic composition of the US population.

The relationship between African Americans and Latinos also came up in this study:

- "I've had older generations that can see it's the same thing and they help you out to make bridges and then I see some hostility: these people aren't getting lynched! They don't have to ride at the back of the bus! Same thing with the younger generations. I know that Latino high schools, they think the Black people don't really like us and the same thing with the Latinos here, they are in great divergence. And then you go to other places and there is great cooperation

between the two groups. I know that Numbers USA, which is a conservative think-tank, had a video about a local Black leader saying how the undocumented population was bringing down their jobs for the African Americans but then you go elsewhere and you see people saying 'our Latino brothers need us at this moment'. I have some Latino friends at the university who are dating some of the Black students here as well and it's like 'oh, you are dating a Black girl'. It's huge extremes, middle ground, it's all over the place" (F32, M, 21, DACA).

- "As far as the African American community they, you know, talk a lot about how they are... when they apply for jobs like that, they are not the first pick, so to say, and I feel like that is something that would transfer over to the Hispanic community as well" (J36, M, 21, DACA).
- "...minorities in general are more attracted to each other, like: you get me, I get you" (R18, F, 21, DACA).

Tensions may also play out in work spaces: "IHOP was different because it was a different environment, first of all. In my first job, it was all Hispanics from the same country, so I would say we got along just okay. IHOP, different environment, since it was all American people but they were African American and they were very territorial in a way. Sometimes they were like: why did you put that customer in your section and not in my section? Do you think she's better than me or that I'm not a good enough server for that person? And I'd have to say: I'm sorry but I don't think that. It's the way I'm doing it, I'm doing it based on rotation" (D30, F, 17, DACA). Such situations may not be directly about race, but racial and cultural differences and inter-group dynamics and stereotypes likely play a role. Barriers can be broken down but trust needs to be established.

### c. Latinos at HBCUs

Three study participants were also attending Johnson C Smith University (JCSU), a historically Black college/university (HBCU),<sup>45</sup> and spoke candidly about that experience. While this is not something I specifically asked about, I find it worth including, particularly in the context of inter-group relations and the South, where most HBCUs are located. One of my participants worked directly with the president of the university and had many insights into the inner-workings of the institution. The private university purposely invested in attracting and providing need-based scholarships for Latino students, many of them with DACA, as a way to continue to HBCU mission of providing an education the underserved. About 100 students enrolled within a few years.

- "Here, because the university is expanding the Latino population, including undocumented students, or Latinos regardless of their documentation status, they wanted somebody to be at important events and talk with board members to see these are the Latino students and these are the capabilities that they have. I guess that's why I'm working here with the president. (...) When I came to this university I had a culture shock because I had never seen so many Latino students in my life. I came to an HBCU to get my Latino experience. There were 20 of us. (...) we don't see ourselves as international students. But sometimes they see us as international students. There's a lot of room for discussion" (F32, M, 21, DACA).

---

<sup>45</sup> HBCUs were originally established to provide educational opportunity for newly freed Blacks. Many were established after the American Civil War. Today, over 100 HBCUs continue to serve Blacks students, though about 18% of those enrolled are not Black. Most HBCUs are four-year institutions in the southern US, where slavery was most common (Provasnik and Shafer, 2004).

- “I feel like there was a wave or time period where they were accepting a lot of Hispanic students and they kind of close it right now. There’s not a lot of Hispanic students coming in right now. So I feel like that’s always kind of a way of tokenism where they wanted to be able to promote the university as being diverse, but they only really took in a few and then they’re like, “ Oh ok, now we are diverse.” Maybe jobs might be doing that as well. But I support it, I would support it even if it started out that way, you could change into, you know, into something else. Once those people get higher positions, it might be different” (J36, M, 21, DACA).

Though the university has had international students and non-Black students before, intentionally bringing in local Hispanic students was a new effort. “There is an exciting trend related to the growth of Hispanic/Latino students, especially here in North Carolina. We saw it as an opportunity to open our doors to undocumented Latino students—a new market for us. We had the opportunity to do it and it gave us a distinction. This radical trajectory mandates that we co-create realities around the transcendent trends in higher education and we believe that trajectory will keep us moving into the future purposefully,” JCSU’s president Carter shared in an interview published by the American Council on Education (ACE) early 2016. Other HBCU’s across the nation are reaching out to Latinos. “Experts say that it’s too early to say how the influx of Latinos is transforming the culture of HBCUs, but they say they’ve been quick to notice changes such as the emergence of Latino fraternities and sororities,” Oguntoyinbo (2015) wrote. JSCU was the first HBCU to admit a Latino fraternity. Opening doors to Latinos is in line with the mission of HBCUs to provide an education

for the most marginalized and oppressed. Latinos can relate to the mission and environments of HBCUs (Oguntinyinbo, 2015). The article also recognizes tensions that may arise within HBCUs due to these demographic and cultural shifts. Perhaps this is anticipated. After all, universities and institutions are microcosms of society and therefore run into the same tensions as broader society does. In a region that has been historically defined by Black-White relations, adding different ethnic groups means reconfiguring space and social positionality. Such dynamics play out at various scales. Given the nature of the academic environment, universities and colleges also offer important and unique spaces for inter-group dialogue.

Participants of this dissertation observantly point out the need for community and trust building between different racial/ethnic groups. Though there have been a few efforts to start this conversation,<sup>46</sup> stereotypes and tensions prevail. Conversations and initiatives around inter-group relations and minority relations in Charlotte and the South should be occurring at the ‘higher’ policy and decision-makers level as well as at the local level with community members who are directly sharing space and resources. Uniting these groups even at the local level is not an easy task. First, neither of these groups is monolithic, nor do they have unified fronts or agendas. There are inter-group differences among African Americans and among Latinos that make it hard for this uniting to occur. Second, despite parallels (e.g. experiences of discrimination, segregation and exclusion), the histories of slavery and migration are different. Though one could argue that many Latinos come to the US because they had no other choice, and that the

---

<sup>46</sup> In Charlotte, for instance, UNC Charlotte organized a discussion entitled ‘Two Communities at a Crossroads: Latinos and African Americans in Charlotte’ on October 21, 2015.



conditions low-wage migrants work in today is a form of modern-day slavery, it is not forced migration in the same way that historic slavery was so that can be a complicated and contentious point around which to rally. Third, people from Latin America come to the US with their own racial biases and experiences of racial hierarchies as constructed in the context of their origin countries. In terms of colonization, eradicating indigenous groups, exploiting Africans as slaves, and spreading white supremacy, North and South America have a lot in common and Latin Americans grow up with similar skin color hierarchies as North Americans, translating into negative stereotypes of darker-skinned people. US media perpetuates these stereotypes. Fourth, linguistic and cultural differences may make it difficult for the two groups to connect and break down those preconceived notions. Youth participants were aware that building these community relations would benefit both groups. One of the ways they mentioned this could be achieved is through African American-Hispanic youth dialogues and collaborative advocacy initiatives.

Current dominant powers benefit from the status quo and it is convenient to them if minorities stay divided. The goal is not to disenfranchise Caucasians but rather to promote racial and social justice and equal opportunities regardless of skin color, which is presently not the case. This vision involves a much broader reconceptualization of how resources are divided and accumulated, and how we treat each other. Of course, these relationships do not happen overnight and have a long, complex historical context, particularly in the US South. Yet we must attempt to set these changes in motion now to co-create the future we envision for the next generations. The price of inaction is too high. As Desmond Tutu articulated: “If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.”

Finally, just because the context described is characteristic of the South, does not mean it only influences people in the South. In *Southern location, national implications*, Lippard and Gallagher (2011) explain that the country is looking at the South to see how issues around immigration and race relations will play out. What the South is facing is not “new” to the US; it has and is playing out in other parts of the country too. Racism forms and morphs itself to current-day situations and circumstances, and its impacts are pervasive in all dimensions of society, including education, housing, and the labor market. It pertains to who has access to resources and opportunities – and who does not – which is determined by policies and human interactions, both which are shaped by our ideas about “the other.” Regardless of how we *feel* about it, the reality is that “America must plan for a multiracial future” (Lippard and Gallagher, 2011, p.336). This involves recognizing Latinos – immigrants and their offspring – as permanent members of our Charlotte, North Carolina, Southern, and US communities, neighborhoods and work places. Full and equitable integration benefits us all and, in turn, failure to do so will cause increased inequality and inter-group tensions in the future.

## CHAPTER 11: CONCLUSIONS, CONTRIBUTIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has demonstrated the multiple ways in which 1.5-generation Hispanic immigrant youth face labor market exclusion, the assets they bring, and the solutions they offer to improve their labor market integration. I triangulated data from interviews, questionnaires, and participatory action research methods to examine the dynamics and intersectionality of factors such as race/ethnicity, 'illegality', SES, gender, and education as they apply to this group's job experiences and work opportunities. In this final chapter, I present a summary of findings, key contributions to knowledge, and future paths for investigation.

### 11.1 Summary of Findings

All Millennials in US society are subject to national and local labor market trends and the context of what it is like coming of age today as part of this generation, the largest and most diverse in American history. Challenges they face include the rising cost of higher education (and crippling student debt), and school-work trajectories that are longer, more complex, and highly differentiated (McDonald, 1997). Within the overarching broader context, this dissertation demonstrates how the process for 1.5-generation Hispanic immigrant youth differs from their peers and is marked by various obstacles of social and spatial exclusion. That said, there are also several ways in which members of this group have managed to gain a foothold in the labor market – as a result of their bilingualism, support networks, and determined, “immigrant” character traits, for instance.

My study sample consisted of 36 youth, 15 of whom participated in the PAR project. It is important to acknowledge that 1.5-generation Latino immigrant youth are not a homogeneous group; they represent many identities, experiences, sub-cultures and family backgrounds. Despite significant differences in personalities and levels of awareness among participants, dominant themes and several common narratives about the interplay between social and spatial in-/exclusion emerged from the data. These narratives often held true across age, neighborhood of residence, and gender differences, and were predominantly shaped by being an immigrant and being Hispanic. My goal was to provide a nuanced overview that recognizes challenges as well as assets and diversity in perspectives and experiences among participating youth.

- a. Lack of documentation status is a factor that intersects with but tends to override other personal, household, and neighborhood characteristics. Undocumented youth face unique challenges that those who are citizens or green card holders do not encounter because of state and federal policy. Yet, there is a certain complexity that lies behind this seemingly straight-forward notion, e.g.: undocumented migrants can still find work; lacking a social security number can also restrict volunteer opportunities; documentation status is a fluid, rather than static, reality; and, even with DACA, employers may be hesitant to hire people. Temporary visa holders have the benefits associated with a social security number, but may face similar long-run uncertainties due to possibly falling out of status.
- b. DACA has profound benefits on undocumented participants' lives and has shifted the way youth with DACA go about their daily lives. However, DACA is not

enough to secure their future. As one participant described it, DACA is like “being invited to the party but only allowed to look in through the window” (R18, F, 21, DACA). Limitations of DACA include: exclusion from certain jobs, for instance in the military or requiring certain accreditations; uncertainty about the future, because DACA is a temporary visa and not a lawful status; stigma and discrimination around not having a lawful, permanent status and that being evident on official documents, such as a North Carolina driver’s license; and the lack of benefits, health care, and in-state tuition. Moreover, DACA is only for a narrow group of people and for a limited time frame.

- c. There is a lack of understanding about immigration policies and statuses by youth and their families, and employers, which can reduce job opportunities for non-citizen youth. Main points of confusion and misunderstanding revolve around newer policies (e.g. DACA), less common statuses (e.g. U visa, TPS), and policies that change over time and between states (e.g. in-state tuition). Lack of employer familiarity with DACA and how it should be used can put DACAmented youth at a disadvantage in the labor market. Undocumented youth and youth who are unaware of what they are eligible for may miss out on valuable career-building opportunities.
- d. Many Latino/a youth, regardless of their status, face stereotyping and discrimination at work, school, or in public spaces, based on their ethnicity. They also see an. This impacts their work access, confidence, and aspirations. “Looking Hispanic,” having an accent, or having a “Hispanic-sounding” name can triggers ethnic stereotyping. This plays out in the job market in the following ways: access is

granted in certain sectors/jobs and restricted in others; youth feel that Hispanics are seen as different and less competent compared to their Caucasian counterparts. Youth are also bothered by the assumption that all Hispanics are Mexican, that being Hispanic is associated with being undocumented, and by the underrepresentation of Hispanics in professional roles and in the media. Positive ethnicity-based stereotypes exist, but they can back-fire. For instance, the positive association with Hispanics as “hard-working” and therefore as more desirable hires, can work to their disadvantage if “hard-working” is interpreted by employers as “exploitable.”

- e. As educational attainment increases, it becomes easier to access the labor market (especially those jobs youth consider ‘good’ jobs) due to higher human capital. Education is (considered) the ticket to upward mobility, yet the exorbitant cost of higher education (particularly for undocumented students who pay out-of-state tuition in North Carolina) forms a major barrier to pursuing career goals. In addition, a college or graduate degree does not guarantee a professional career if an individual does not have a social security number.
- f. Participants talked about how their parents came to the US for the children to have a better life (often interpreted as access to quality education and upward mobility), which is a common narrative among immigrant families.
- g. Even if the participant’s parents are documented, speak English, are employed, and/or have a higher educational attainment, youth typically agreed that parents could not offer enough information and assistance in their career development because they did not grow up in the US and/or work in industries of interest to

youth. That said, family expectations and support in other ways were key in motivating and encouraging youth to work hard and to achieve their dreams. Via mentors and teachers, some youth gain access to professional networks.

- h. Socioeconomic status of the household influences the labor market opportunities of youth, mainly because it impacts the resources and services youth have available to them and the quality of their schools.
- i. Although gender influenced the jobs youth participants held, work-seeking experiences and spatial mobility did not typically appear to vary by gender. Males were more likely employed in male-dominated fields (and vice versa), but – unlike previous studies may suggest – I did not find that females had reduced spatial mobility due to more responsibilities in the household or more spaces that are considered ‘unsafe’ to them.
- j. Labor market opportunities and navigation strategies are spatially contingent and have a dialectic relationship with youth lives. The ways in which space emerged from the results are mainly in relation to: neighborhood of residence, transportation, and segregation in schools. Participants are likely to live in suburban areas where Latinos are concentrated and where median household incomes are lower than the county average. Youth tend to seek jobs close to home due to limited spatial mobility. The lack of public transportation options is a hallmark of sprawling Southern cities and has become a greater problem with the suburbanization of immigrant settlement and poverty. In the bigger picture of job access, transportation was overshadowed by other factors, but on a day-to-day basis, the ability – or lack thereof – to be spatially mobile came up repeatedly. the contrary also holds true

for some youth, in the sense that mobility (having a car and a license) became a burden to them because driving takes up a lot of time or meant they received additional responsibilities. Participants commented on how high school classes are segregated by race/ethnicity within their (more diverse) schools, and that there tend to be lower expectations for minority and immigrant students. This is important because schools can be the central place where children and adolescents mix and learn how to work in environments with cultural and racial diversity. However, given the segregated nature of schools and classrooms, schools become the place where children learn about segregation and inequalities.

- k. Neighborhood factors were not given much weight in influencing career decisions, though there is some territorial stigmatization: Employers as well as participants themselves and others around them have certain ideas about what are desirable or undesirable areas and that may influence how they view people (including job candidates) from those areas. The spatial also emerged in other ways: for example, the work space itself can act a micro-geography in which ethnicity-based stereotypes and in-/exclusion play out.
- l. Youth are able to leverage their bilingualism, biculturalism, and "immigrant" determination in professional situations. Youth are hired to interact with Spanish-speaking customers, English-speaking clients (when other employees do not speak English), and Spanish-speaking staff (if the employer does not speak Spanish). The bilingual advantage is diminished if the level or nature of Spanish (writing, reading, speaking), is not at the professional level expected in the work place.



Moreover, for profession-level jobs, solely being bilingual will not help if the individual does not have the education and human capital required for that position. There is currently no evidence that bilingualism leads to higher pay. Immigrant youth may therefore only fully harness the potential benefits of their bilingualism in the mainstream professional labor market if they obtain a higher education degree. Youth biculturalism can translate into a well-developed ability to adapt to new or unfamiliar situations. Participants also attribute many of their characteristics (hard-working, determined, adaptable, open-minded, e.g.) to their (undocumented) immigrant experience, and they add that these traits make them more marketable.

- m. Hispanic immigrant youth are aware of some of the negative aspects of the labor market and social climate (e.g. anti-immigrant context of receptivity, economic recession, discrimination at various levels) and respond in ways that reflect the fluidity and multi-dimensionality of their identities.
- n. The context of the new immigrant gateway means there is less infrastructure for Latinos to benefit from compared cities with long standing gateway status. It also means there might be more prejudice towards immigrants and more fear among the immigrant community, especially those without documentation and in mixed-status families. This may be the case because people are less accustomed to diversity and the longstanding history of racial tension in the South.
- o. In the face of challenges, youth present agency and resilience. Participants are gaining work experience in a variety of fields and many have a sense of optimism about their future employment. They demonstrated how they employ socio-spatial

strategies to navigate and improve their labor market opportunities, leveraging their assets and strengths. Their activism and continuous push to become recognized as full Americans who belong here is shaping the story of Latinos in the US.

- p. The PAR project and avenues for change offered by youth support the idea that youth themselves know best how to improve their labor market opportunities, and they should be involved in the creation and implementation of these initiatives.

This research is more informed and more powerful because of youth participants' central role.

## 11.2 Contributions to Literature and Knowledge

### 11.2.1 Literature on Immigrant Youth

#### i. Millennials

As discussed in this dissertation, some work-seeking behaviors, experiences, and perspectives of Latino immigrant youth reflects those of Millennials in general.

Millennials face post-recession labor market uncertainty and many carry the burden of high student loan debt. Despite this, they are optimistic and eager to approach today's labor needs in creative ways. Work-life balance and personal fulfillment in a job are valued. For Hispanic Millennials in particular, being able to help support their family is important. Employers seeking to hire Millennials and researchers studying youth will have to understand these perspectives.

#### ii. DACA

This study adds to our knowledge about the benefits and limitations of DACA, as experienced by immigrant youth. As such, it offers a policy evaluation from the recipients' viewpoint, which can inform the continuation or modification of DACA and

future immigration policies. There is evidence that, unless the issue of access to higher education is addressed, Hispanic immigrant youth with non-permanent or no legal status will continue to face restricted access to professional jobs and upward mobility. I knew participants' documentation status and we had open-hearted conversations about how their status influenced their lives and future expectations. This key variable is missing or only inferred in other studies. Getting to this level requires trust-building and reliance on non-traditional approaches that destabilize the usual power dynamics between researcher and research 'subject.'

### iii. Other

My study demonstrates how spaces and geographies of exclusion and inclusion are perceived and how creating inclusive work spaces can facilitate better integration of immigrant youth into the labor force. The experience of 1.5-generation Hispanic immigrant youth transitioning into the labor market is shaped by immigration status, ethnicity, social networks, information access, and socio-economic status – and not only in ways that these factors influence call back rates, interview and application experiences, and job-related knowledge, but also how they impact day-to-day experiences, self-perception, identity, and opportunity structures.

Participants offer a list of recommendations on how to improve their job opportunities, e.g.: information sessions for youth and their parents about college and careers; mentoring programs; job training and connections; Hispanic student organizations; higher education scholarships; in-state tuition for all youth; a pathway to citizenship; name-blind applications; removing the 'race-ethnicity' box from job applications; addressing the documentation status of immigrant parents; more advocacy;

health care for everyone; more diverse representations of Latinos in the media; community and trust building initiatives (between different groups); and greater clarity about policies. Furthermore, they offer insights into *how* these recommendations can be implemented. Consequently, this study can serve as a manual for those seeking to implement and further youth labor market access.

### 11.2.2 Labor Market Theory

#### i. Strategies of navigation

Youth strategies of navigation are a direct consequence of their socio-institutional and physical environments. Labor market access is more than job-related and ties into wider discussion about opportunities and identity. Such findings emphasize the importance of research that is interdisciplinary and recognizes connections between themes.

Besides exclusion, there are also ways in which youth talk about being *included* and we can learn from the innovative way they are finding mobility and assistance. Rather than pointing only to obstacles, this study uniquely highlights what works to include people as well as what stands in the way. I discussed buffers, protecting factors, social and spatial strategies towards inclusion, and demonstrated the assets youth bring and are able to leverage, as well as their agency.

#### ii. Informal and formal labor market structures

The absence of local-level institutions (other than high schools and colleges) in the recommendations offered by youth participants suggests a disconnect between youth and these organizations, such as the Charlotte Chambers of Commerce and local companies. This reveals an opportunity to educate local businesses and business

associations, and connect youth to local mentors. Given the lack of a Hispanic-serving college and the challenges Hispanic youth face in accessing college, some local colleges are making an effort to recruit and provide opportunities for Hispanic youth. Hispanic youth who make it to college find (on-campus) job support but more can be done to reach those who are in a community college or not in higher education. Latino employment concentrations exist and youth are able to leverage these connections, though most desire a career in the mainstream labor market.

### iii. Compounding barriers

What makes labor market access challenging to improve is that youth often face one barrier after another. For instance, if the documentation status is resolved, discrimination may still persist, and once youth get to college they still need support (financial, informational) to succeed in college and obtain employment afterwards. These compounding barriers impact socio-spatial access as well as how access is perceived and experienced by youth themselves. Boundary constructions are created through a range of federal and state policies, and reinforced by interactions with, e.g., educational institutions, employers, and authorities (social control). A multi-pronged, multi-sectored approach is therefore required in order to enhance job opportunities for Latino youth.

### iv. Legal mismatch (as opposed to a spatial or skills mismatch)

Documentation status becomes an equalizer in many ways, regardless of (self-identified) socio-economic status and other important demographics. Traditional labor market and immigrant assimilation theories are challenged by a 'legal mismatch' that overpowers other factors. This has created a new institutional structure of exclusion, one that is based primarily on documentation status rather than class or neighborhood. Like

Terriquez (20014, p. 406), my study “uniquely accounts for the legal status of the 1.5 generation and offers support for qualitative studies that highlight the disadvantages experienced by undocumented youth (Abrego 2006; Gonzales 2011).” This study confirms research by others that legal status “plays an important role in shaping youths’ trajectories” (Terriquez, 2004, p. 384) and it adds nuances about how this plays out, and how youth cope with it.

### 11.2.3 Segmented Assimilation Theory

#### i. Shortcomings

An important take-away point from the concept of segmented assimilation is how multi-dimensional the determinants and outcomes of inclusion and exclusion are. As demonstrated in this dissertation, opportunity – or the lack thereof – results from variables intersecting and interacting with one another. Results fit partially into the segmented assimilation model, but not fully. Hispanic immigrant youth do, however, face divergent pathways and these are both structured ones that people follow, and constructed ones that people create. Interviews provided insights into the causal mechanisms of these divergent paths - interplay between structure and agency. Consequences include disparities in job prospects and lifetime earnings, and lost potential and talent. Without options for upward mobility, we risk creating a permanent working class of Latino migrants and their families. Investing in the futures of Latino youth will help them be self-sufficient, economically stable and productive contributors to society.

#### ii. Divergent pathways

I found that neither the straight assimilation model nor the segmented assimilation alternative easily capture the complex ways in which Latino youth are being incorporated

into the labor market. What my work does reveal, however, is that there are divergent pathways and these are both structured ones that youth follow, and constructed ones that youth create. These pathways are shaped by their personal and household characteristics but also largely by the context of their reception into the US and the South, the presence of Latino labor markets and networks, and the motives that drive their families' migrations to the US.

I also realized that qualitative and participatory methods are not be the best way to measure segmented assimilation. A longitudinal, quantitative study would be more appropriate. The methods I used, however, did provide new insights into the causal mechanisms that drive divergence in youth trajectories, and how this divergence is experienced and perceived by youth. The 'structure vs. agency' debate is at the center of these causal mechanisms, according to participants. Education quality and level also play a large role, with higher education being considered a ticket to upward mobility.

### iii. Fluidity

The fluidity and weight of documentation status means that changes in immigration status can drastically influence the trajectories of immigrant youth. Current divergent pathways call into question the 'American Dream' and potential of economic mobility for this group. While some feel like they are 'living the American Dream,' others – particularly undocumented and DACAmented youth – are disillusioned. Sustained and multi-fold barriers to full labor market inclusion and opportunities to reach their full potential may damper youth optimism and create a permanent working class. Beyond the significant consequences for youth and their families, the economic and

societal consequences of their lost potential is substantial. Since their trajectories are still unfolding, now is the time to act.

#### 11.2.4 The Discipline of Geography

##### i. Spatial contingency of labor market opportunity

Geographers are known for investigating the role of space and perceptions of place. The journal entries and mental maps about thoughts, travels, or experiences related to work captured socio-spatial relationships, experiences, and emotions of everyday spatial experiences. They allow us to see how “geographies of exclusion” are perceived and how creating inclusive work spaces can facilitate better integration of immigrant youth into the labor force. Transportation, for instance, is seen as a barrier to labor market opportunity among youth without a license and car; however, those with a car may receive additional responsibilities resulting from their spatial mobility, such as picking up/dropping siblings.

The spatial contingency of job access in both confirmed and contradicted in this study. The Charlotte, NC context and its receptivity to Latino immigrants shapes how youth view themselves and their opportunities. Although neighborhood variables influence job access for 1.5-generation Hispanic youth, their impacts are minimized in relation to other variables, such as immigration status and skin color. While we often talk about social and spatial variables as distinct, it is actually the interplay between the two that is compounding the experience of immigrant youth as they navigate the labor market.

##### ii. Spatial nature of navigation strategies

Spatially, a common strategy is to seek employment close to home (or sometimes school) so youth can walk to work or, if dependent on a ride, the friend or family member



driving does not have to go far. This might seem common across all youth, but the stakes are much higher for youth with undocumented parents because of the risk of being caught driving without a license. Participants also expressed spatial preferences about where to work based on personal experiences, stereotypes, facts, and statements made by others (e.g. peers, family, media). Youth also pointed out that resources and information about jobs, as well as internships, need to be local (e.g. at schools, apartment complexes, or community organizations) in order for youth and their parents to access them. Information about jobs is also spread through word-of-mouth between family and friends across space, via phone and social media.

### iii. Multi-scalar perspective

One of the strengths of geographic research is that it takes into account the multiple scales that interact with one another to create and influence social phenomena. The multi-scalar framework I used recognizes how individual and local-level factors are involved in place-making practices and help shape the conditions of their communities. This framework also recognizes the influences of individual agency and local-level factors that are, in turn, involved in place-making practices and shape the sociocultural and economic conditions of their communities. Factors at different scales work at times in opposition and, at times, in support of one another. For instance, documentation status is ‘created’ at the federal level but dealt with at the local level by immigrants themselves, employers, etc., or a certain college (HBCU or otherwise) may make an effort to recruit Hispanic youth but inter-racial tensions in the South or legacies of institutional inequality still persist.

### 11.2.5 The Subfield of Urban and Regional Analysis

#### i. New gateway

My work adds to that by DeJonckheere and colleagues (2014, p.2) by exploring the contextual experiences of Latino living in non-traditional immigrant gateway cities, and by “attending to their strengths, protective factors, and adaptive strategies.” It appears that being in a new immigrant gateway means there is less infrastructure and support for youth as they navigate their work options, and there is also more prejudice towards immigrants and Latinos, partly due to lack of awareness and exposure. From participants’ perspective, this is especially the case in rural areas outside the city of Charlotte.

#### ii. The not-so-new “New South”

The concept of the “New South” is not a problem in and of itself, but we must recognize that demographic shifts in the US South (with influx of people from across the US and abroad) are no longer new. Moreover, we cannot use the ‘newness’ as an excuse to not having enough resources and support for immigrant families. Additionally, diversifying demographics does not mean discrimination is history and people are more open-minded; a lot of work still needs to be done around community relations and combatting social, economic, and racial/ethnic inequities.

#### iii. Other

This dissertation can inform urban researchers and practitioners outside of Geography. For instance, sociologists may be interested in my findings around community formation, solidification and youth activism. Community and public health workers can look at how factors such as documentation status and work environments influence individual stress levels and community well-being. Political scientists can use

this work to further their knowledge on how the multi-scalar policy context of immigration impacts individuals and society as a whole. Economists can benefit from my contributions to labor market segmentation and immigrant youth contributions to the work force. Lastly, educators can apply my findings to better serve their immigrant students.

#### 11.2.6 Participatory Action Research

##### i. New knowledge about process

The process of collecting and analyzing data was largely shaped by the participatory nature of this study. By documenting the process, I offer a manual for other researchers and community partners interested in engaging youth in similar projects, thereby contributing to how participatory research is conducted. Furthermore, from a pedagogical standpoint, this dissertation contributes to how we study individual's everyday experiences in relation to their position in broader society, and challenge power dynamics between the researcher and the researched without compromising the rigor of the study.

##### ii. New content knowledge

Besides process-related contributions, the participatory framework provided valuable content about immigrant youth navigating the labor market that would not have been uncovered without this approach. Taking a mixed-methods approach helped answer the research questions in various ways, allowing for triangulation and a more realistic, perhaps accurate, depiction of the complex realities of everyday life for Hispanic immigrant youth. The journals, mental maps, and PAR project allowed for more creative youth input and different forms of data collection and analysis that would have been

missed if I had only conducted the questionnaires and interviews. Allowing youth to code their own journals – and subsequently comparing their analysis to mine – added (sub-)themes. Participants' optimism, assets and strengths became apparent in the process and the content of the website would have looked very differently if I had created it by myself (it would have been much less creative, user-friendly, and approachable for their age group). By using participatory methods, I demonstrated that youth know best how to improve their opportunities, and are capable of making valuable contributions to scientific knowledge and their communities. Avenues of change do not always exist yet, but can and are being created by youth as they navigate their opportunities and respond accordingly.

#### 11.2.7 Doctoral Research

The dissertation is an independent, original research endeavor that doctoral students complete to obtain their degree. It is a culmination of their doctoral studies and a foundation for their research career. Given that students are expected to work independently on all components of the study – to demonstrate their abilities as an independent scholar – the very nature of a dissertation contrasts participatory epistemologies. Though I understand the necessity of individual work, participatory doctoral students are challenged to conduct two related but separate research projects; one that meets the criteria of independent scholarly research and another one that is collaborative and participatory. Students should consider this when budgeting their time and funds. I have, nonetheless, found the methods and approaches I chose to be rewarding in terms of both process and outputs.

### 11.2.8 Other

In the US, a ‘country of immigrants,’ the social and economic wellbeing of immigrants and their children is an important issue at the local, state, and national levels. At the same time, immigration is a highly contentious and politically divided issue, as recent efforts to pass immigration reform and the DACA/DAPA executive order have highlighted. The US is struggling to improve job opportunities, especially for vulnerable groups, yet attention to those most in need can provide significant benefits to society as a whole. This research informs immigration and economic development policy, particularly by pointing out the potential widespread adverse outcomes if we fail to provide equal job opportunities for all youth. The issues are complex but also grounded on the simple notion and logic of creating equal opportunities for all youth, which is something upon which most people can agree.

Increased public interest in immigration issues is a blessing and a curse. Immigration and its policies will remain a contentious political and social topic for years to come, in the US and across the globe. Migration is not new but we do live in a time of instability and xenophobia,<sup>47</sup> which increase and constrain human mobility and immigrant integration. By debating whether or not we agree with migration and ‘approve of’ migrants in ‘our’ countries, we oversimplify the issues at stake and fail to acknowledge the factors driving migration in the first place, the contributions as well as the challenges migrants bring, and the multi-scalar facets of integration. We find

---

<sup>47</sup> Instability and xenophobia are always present to a certain extent, but ebb and flow from the surface in society, and the group(s) towards which the xenophobia is expressed may change over time. With presidential elections on the horizon, there is a lot of talk about immigration and immigrants now. Media and technologies have also allowed this instability and xenophobia to spread more broadly and rapidly than in the past.

ourselves divided and being reactive rather than proactive. What we can do is: a) address underlying factors pushing people out of their countries, who would otherwise prefer to stay; b) implement policies and responses that acknowledge the dignity and human rights of every individual; c) ensure that, when migrants settle in their receiving country, they receive the support to successfully integrate. Though this will require resources and services on the front end, it helps migrants become productive, involved members of society, which benefits everyone. Currently, we are witnessing what happens if these steps are not in place, including ongoing conflict, human rights violations, and large subsections of society consisting of migrants who have been here for over 10-15 years, yet live in fear and are disconnected from most of society. This is not the kind of world I wish to live in or pass on to following generations.

### 11.3 Future Paths for Investigation

The data and research process for this dissertation reveal multiple opportunities for further research.

- a. Racial/ethnic and cultural identities were not the focus of this study but emerged as important in youth lives. Further work can be done on immigrant and Latino/s youth identities, including Hispanics with different skin colors.
- b. Racism and prejudice affects many people of color in the US. Researchers can work with all communities (White, Hispanic, Black, etc.) to see how we can address this, because all of us can play a role.
- c. The tensions and misunderstandings between racial/ethnic and income groups keep us divided. Social, spatial, and economic segregation has created a broken,

polarized society. More research should be done on how to unite people and build community.

- d. While it is important to point out disadvantages and challenges immigrant youth face, more studies can look at buffers and strategies that help youth succeed.
- e. There is a need for more spatially comparative studies, and longitudinal studies following participants over time. For instance, as Flores (2010) suggests, there should be further analyses about the impact of a college degree for immigrant youth, also comparing youth of different statuses. If a college degree was secured, what do their trajectories look like and do those vary by status? If a college degree was not secured, what difference does that make for undocumented youth?
- f. By focusing on one particular group in this case study, it becomes difficult to tease out what is unique to Hispanic vs. non-Hispanic immigrant youth, what is unique about the Charlotte context, what is unique about Hispanic immigrant youth and non-immigrant youth, etc. Further data and studies with comparison groups can help resolve this. Indeed, “[w]ithout including native born comparison groups, it is often hard to sort out what aspects of young people’s behavior stem from having immigrant parents and what simply reflect being a young person in urban America today” (Kasinitz et al, 2008, p.349).
- g. I would like to see more people involve youth as partners in research and community-based initiatives, developing solutions and crafting policies that impact them, and more action research to get them involved in the changes they wish to see. Less about them and more with them.

Although further research on this topic is important, I believe the biggest challenges illustrated in this study cannot be resolved by research. Rather, we need to take collective action across industries and scales to address and overcome the issues at stake. One in 5 children in the US are immigrants or children of immigrants. The number and percent of Hispanics in the US is also increasing. Therefore, if immigrant children or Latinos have a problem, the nation has a problem. Unless we fully welcome and integrate Hispanic immigrant youth and their families, they will not be able to become fully contributing members of society, which has serious implications for our economy and inter-group social relations. Visible and outspoken Latino/a immigrant youth are giving people hope<sup>48</sup> and we need to work with them to ensure they have a bright future. It is too early to know what will happen with the young people who participated in this study, and their peers. The fact that their futures are not yet written, however, should be viewed as an opportunity to make change. This window of opportunity is rapidly closing and demands our immediate attention.

---

<sup>48</sup> For example, in the Levine Museum of the New South's NUEVOlution dialogues, I see how dialogue participants find hope and inspiration from the young Latinos portrayed in the exhibit.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abrego, L. J. (2011). Legal Consciousness of Undocumented Latinos: Fear and Stigma as Barriers to Claims-Making for First-and 1.5-Generation Immigrants. *Law & Society Review*, 45(2), 337-370.
- Abrego, L. J., & Gonzales, R. G. (2010). Blocked Paths, Uncertain Futures: The Postsecondary Education and Labor Market Prospects of Undocumented Latino Youth. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR)*, 15(1-2), 144-157.
- Akom, A. A. (2008). Black metropolis and mental life: Beyond the "burden of 'acting white'" toward a third wave of critical racial studies. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 39(3), 247-265.
- Alba, R. (2005). Bright vs. blurred boundaries: Second-generation assimilation and exclusion in France, Germany, and the United States. *Ethnic and racial studies*, 28(1), 20-49.
- Alba, R., Kasinitz, P., & Waters, M. C. (2011). The kids are (mostly) alright: Second-generation assimilation: Comments on Haller, Portes and Lynch. *Social Forces*, 89(3), 763-773.
- Aldrich, H. E., & Waldinger, R. (1990). Ethnicity and entrepreneurship. *Annual review of sociology*, 111-135.
- Aleixo, M., Hansen, S., Horii, S., & Un, S. (2014). Theory Ain't Practice: Four Novice Researchers Navigate Dilemmas of Representation Within Immigrant Populations. *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education*, 8(1), 32-43.
- Alonso, W. (1960). A theory of the urban land market. *Papers in Regional Science*, 6(1), 149-157.
- American Council on Education (ACE) (2016). Q&A: Updating a Legacy. Published on Jan. 11, 2016. Accessed on Jan. 17, 2016: <https://www.acenet.edu/the-presidency/columns-and-features/Pages/QA-Updating-a-Legacy.aspx>
- Amsden, J., & VanWynsberghe, R. (2005). Community mapping as a research tool with youth. *Action Research*, 3(4), 357-381.
- Anderson, K. (2005). Exclusionary Politics and the Question of National Belonging: Australian Ethnicities in 'Multiscalar' Focus. *Ethnicities*, 5(4), 460-485.
- Arriaga, B. H. (2012). "67 Suenos": Inspiring a Movement for Undocumented Voices to Be Heard. *Journal of the Association of Mexican American Educators*, 6(1), 71-76.
- Assudani, R. H. (2009). Ethnic entrepreneurship: The distinct role of ties. *Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship*, 22(2), 197-205.
- Aydemir, A., & Sweetman, A. (2006). First and second generation immigrant educational attainment and labor market outcomes: A comparison of the United States and Canada.
- Bacallao, M. L., & Smokowski, P. R. (2005). "Entre dos mundos" (Between Two Worlds): bicultural skills training with Latino immigrant families. *J Prim Prev*, 26(6), 485-509.
- Bailey, A.J., R.A. Wright, A. Mountz, and I.M. Miyares (2002) (Re)producing Salvadoran Transnational Geographies. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 92(1): 125-144
- Banks-Santilli, L. (2015). Guilt is one of the biggest struggles first-generation college students face. Washington Post, published June 3, 2015. Accessed Jan. 23, 2016: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2015/06/03/guilt-is-one-of-the-biggest-struggles-first-generation-college-students-face/>

- Baird, J., Adelman, R. M., Reid, L. W., & Jaret, C. (2008). Immigrant Settlement Patterns: The Role of Metropolitan Characteristics. *Sociological Inquiry*, 78(3), 310-334.
- Barajas, H. L., & Pierce, J. L. (2001). The significance of race and gender in school success among Latinas and Latinos in college. *Gender & Society*, 15(6), 859-878.
- Barcus, H.R. (2008) New Destinations for Hispanic Migrants: An Analysis of Rural Kentucky. Chapter 5 in *Latinos in the New South: Transformations of Place*. Ashgate Publishing, UK
- Barron, E. (2011). Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, The. *Harv. J. on Legis.*, 48, 623.
- Batalova, J., & McHugh, M. (2010). *DREAM vs. reality: An analysis of potential DREAM Act beneficiaries*. Migration Policy Institute, National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy.
- Bates, T. (2006). The urban development potential of black-owned businesses. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 72(2), 227-237.
- Bates, Karen Grigsby (2014). 'A Chosen Exile': Black People Passing In White America. Published on National Public Radio (NPR) on Oct. 7, 2014. Accessed on Jan. 17, 2016: [www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2014/10/07/354310370/a-chosen-exile-black-people-passing-in-white-america](http://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2014/10/07/354310370/a-chosen-exile-black-people-passing-in-white-america)
- Bauder, H., & Sharpe, B. (2000). Labor market marginalization of youth in San Antonio, Texas. *The Professional Geographer*, 52(3), 531-543.
- Bauder, H. (2001). Culture in the labor market: Segmentation theory and perspectives of place. *Progress in Human Geography*, 25(1), 37-52.
- Bauder, H. (2002). Neighbourhood effects and cultural exclusion. *Urban Studies*, 39(1), 85-93.
- Bell, D. A. (1995). Who's afraid of critical race theory. *U. Ill. L. Rev.*, 893
- Benthien, C. (2002). *Skin: on the cultural border between self and the world*. Columbia University Press.
- Bertrand, M., & Mullainathan, S. (2004). Are Emily and Greg More Employable Than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field Experiment on Labor Market Discrimination. *The American Economic Review*, 94(4), 991-1013.
- Bertrand, M., and S. Mullainathan (2004) Are Emily and Greg More Employable Than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field Experiment on Labor Market Discrimination. *American Economic Review*, 94(4): 991-1013.
- Besen-Cassino, Y. (2014). *Consuming Work: Youth Labor in America*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. Retrieved January 12, 2016, from Project MUSE database.
- Blanchflower, D. G., Levine, P. B., & Zimmerman, D. J. (2003). Discrimination in the small-business credit market. *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 85(4), 930-943.
- Blumenberg, E., & Smart, M. (2010). Getting by with a little help from my friends...and family: immigrants and carpooling. *Transportation*, 37(3), 429-446. doi:10.1007/s11116-010-9262-4
- Bolt, G., Burgers, J., & Van Kempen, R. (1998). On the social significance of spatial location; spatial segregation and social inclusion. *Netherlands Journal of Housing and the built Environment*, 13(1), 83-95.
- Bonacich, E., & Modell, J. (1980). *The economic basis of ethnic solidarity: Small businesses in the Japanese American community*. University of California Pr.

- Boswell, T. D., & Cruz-Baez, A. D. (1997). Residential segregation by socioeconomic class in metropolitan Miami: 1990. *Urban Geography*, 18(6), 474-496.
- Bourdieu, P. (1985). *'The Forms of Capital' in the Handbook for Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. New York: Greenwood.
- Bowlby, S., Lloyd-Evans, S. and Roche, C. (2004) *Youth employment, racialised gendering and school-work transitions*. In: Parkinson, M. and Boddy, M. (eds.) *City Matters*. Policy Press, Bristol.
- Bradshaw, J. (2004). How has the notion of social exclusion developed in the European discourse?. *The Economic and Labour Relations Review*, 14(2), 168-186.
- Brah, A. (1994). Time, Place, and Others: Discourses of Race, Nation, and Ethnicity. *Sociology*, 28(3), 805-813.
- Bredström, A. (2003). Gendered racism and the production of cultural difference: Media representations and identity work among "immigrant youth" in contemporary Sweden. *Nora: Nordic Journal of Women's Studies*, 11(2), 78-88.
- Brydon-Miller, M., Greenwood, D., & Maguire, P. (2003). Why action research?. *Action research*, 1(1), 9-28.
- Buck, N. (2001). Identifying neighbourhood effects on social exclusion. *Urban studies*, 38(12), 2251-2275.
- Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), US Department of Labor. Employment and Unemployment among Youth - Summer 2015. Released August 18, 2015. Accessed on Jan. 12, 2016: [www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/youth.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/youth.pdf)
- Burns, M. (2013) Pink stripe dropped from driver's licenses for illegal immigrants. WRAL News online. Published on March 21, 2013. Last accessed Nov. 29, 2015: <http://www.wral.com/pink-stripe-dropped-from-driver-s-licenses-for-illegal-immigrants/12252934/#5BZv18EJQuOLuJh2.99>
- Burstein, M. (2005). Combatting the social exclusion of at-risk groups. *PRI Project: New Approaches for Addressing Poverty and Exclusion.*, Ottawa, Ontario.
- Cáceres, M., & Jameson, K. P. (2015). The effects on insurance costs of restricting undocumented immigrants' access to driver licenses. *Southern Economic Journal*, 81(4), 907-927.
- Cahill, C. (2004). Defying gravity? Raising consciousness through collective research. *Children's Geographies*, 2(2), 273-286.
- Cahill, C. (2007a). Doing research with young people: Participatory research and the rituals of collective work. *Children's Geographies*, 5(3), 297-312.
- Cahill, C. (2007b). The personal is political: Developing new subjectivities through participatory action research. *Gender, place and culture*, 14(3), 267-292.
- Cahill, C. (2007c). Repositioning ethical commitments: Participatory action research as a relational praxis of social change. *ACME: an international E-journal for critical geographies*, 6(3), 360-373.
- Cahill, C. (2010). 'Why do they hate us?' Reframing immigration through participatory action research. *Area*, 42(2), 152-161. doi:10.1111/j.1475-4762.2009.00929.x
- Cahill, C., Cerecer, D. A. Q., & Bradley, M. (2010). "Dreaming of...": Reflections on Participatory Action Research as a Feminist Praxis of Critical Hope. *Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work*, 25(4), 406-416.
- Cahill, C., Sultana, F., & Pain, R. (2007). Participatory ethics: politics, practices, institutions. *ACME: an international E-journal for critical geographies*, 6(3), 304-318.

- Cameron, A. E., Cabaniss, E. R., & Teixeira-Poit, S. M. (2012). Revisiting the Underclass Debate Contemporary Applications to Immigrants and Policy Implications. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 34(1), 23-42.
- Cameron, David (2015). The Conservatives have become the party of equality. *The Guardian*. Posted on Oct. 26, 2015. Accessed on Nov. 3, 2015: <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/oct/26/david-cameron-conservatives-party-of-equality>
- Capps, R., M.R. Rosenblum, C. Rodriguez, M. Chisthi (2011) Delegation and Divergence: A study of 287(g) State and Local Immigration Enforcement. January 2011. National Center on Immigration Integration Policy. US Immigration Policy Program. Migration Policy Institute. Available at: <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/pubs/287g-divergence.pdf>
- Caraccioli, M. J., & Wright, B. (2015). Narratives of Resistance: Space, Place, and Identity in Latino Migrant Activism. *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, 14(2), 504-511.
- Cardoza, K. (2016) First-generation college students are not succeeding in college, and money isn't the problem. *Washington Post*. Published Jan. 20, 2016. Accessed Jan. 21, 2016: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2016/01/20/first-generation-college-students-are-not-succeeding-in-college-and-money-isnt-the-problem/>
- Career Builder (2013). Seventy-Five Percent of Workers Who Applied to Jobs Through Various Venues in the Last Year Didn't Hear Back From Employers, CareerBuilder Survey Finds. Published on Feb. 20, 2013. Last accessed on Jan. 20, 2016: [www.careerbuilder.com/share/aboutus/pressreleasesdetail.aspx?sd=2%2f20%2f2013&siteid=cbpr&sc\\_cmp1=cb\\_pr740\\_&id=pr740&ed=12%2f31%2f2013](http://www.careerbuilder.com/share/aboutus/pressreleasesdetail.aspx?sd=2%2f20%2f2013&siteid=cbpr&sc_cmp1=cb_pr740_&id=pr740&ed=12%2f31%2f2013)
- Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC). Data and Information. Last accessed Oct. 21, 2015: <https://www.cpcc.edu/planning/data-and-information>
- Chang, C. (2005). Health Care for Undocumented Immigrant Children: Special Members of an Underclass. *Wash. ULQ*, 83, 1271.
- Charlotte immigrant integration task force (2015). Recommendations to the City of Charlotte. Presented on March 23, 2015. Last accessed on Jan. 14, 2016: <http://charmeck.org/city/charlotte/cic/getinvolved/pages/immigrant-integration-task-force.aspx>
- Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS). CMS Economically Disadvantaged Students. Last accessed Oct. 21, 2015: <http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/cmsdepartments/StudentPlacement/PlanningServices/Documents/EDS%202013%2040th%20day%20sorted%20by%20school%20and%20EDS%20percentage.pdf>
- Chavez, A. F., & Guido-DiBrito, F. (1999). Racial and ethnic identity and development. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 1999(84), 39-47
- Chesser, John (2013). Mapping CMS high school data. UNC Charlotte Urban Institute, posted on Jan. 15, 2013. Last accessed on Oct. 21, 2015: <http://ui.uncc.edu/story/charlotte-mecklenburg-schools-high-school-data-2012#Maps>
- Chetty, R., Hendren, N., Kline, P., & Saez, E. (2014). Where is the land of opportunity? The geography of intergenerational mobility in the United States. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 129(4): 1553-1623, 2014
- Coleman, M. (2007). Immigration geopolitics beyond the Mexico-US border. *Antipode*, 39(1), 54-76.

- Connolly, K. A. (2005). In Search of the American Dream: An Examination of Undocumented Students, In-State Tuition, and the Dream Act. *Cath. UL Rev.*, 55, 193.
- Cotton, D. R., Stokes, A., & Cotton, P. A. (2010). Using observational methods to research the student experience. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 34(3), 463-473.
- Crowley, M., & Lichter, D. T. (2009). Social Disorganization in New Latino Destinations?\*. *Rural Sociology*, 74(4), 573-604.
- Crowley, M., Lichter, D. T., & Qian, Z. (2006). Beyond Gateway Cities: Economic Restructuring and Poverty Among Mexican Immigrant Families and Children\*. *Family Relations*, 55(3), 345-360.
- Daamen, R. (2010). Latino Immigrants and The Transformation of the US South. *International Migration Review*, 44(1), 265-266.
- Davidson, J., & Henderson, V. L. (2010). 'Coming out' on the spectrum: autism, identity and disclosure. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 11(2), 155-170.
- Deakins, D., Smallbone, D., Ishaq, M., Whittam, G., & Wyper, J. (2009). Minority ethnic enterprise in Scotland. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 35(2), 309-330.
- DeJonckheere, M. J., Vaughn, L. M., & Jacquez, F. (2014). Latino Immigrant Youth Living in a Nontraditional Migration City A Social-Ecological Examination of the Complexities of Stress and Resilience. *Urban Education*, 0042085914549360.
- Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2012). *Critical race theory: An introduction*. NYU Press.
- DeLyser, D., & Sui, D. (2013a). Crossing the qualitative-quantitative chasm III Enduring methods, open geography, participatory research, and the fourth paradigm. *Progress in Human Geography*.
- DeLyser, D., & Sui, D. (2013b). Crossing the qualitative-quantitative divide II Inventive approaches to big data, mobile methods, and rhythm analysis. *Progress in Human Geography*, 37(2), 293-305.
- Denzin, N. K. (1989). *Interpretive interactionism*: Sage Publications, Newbury Park, California.
- Department of Homeland Security (DHS). U Visa Law Enforcement Certification Resource Guide for Federal, State, Local, Tribal and Territorial Law Enforcement (date unspecified). Accessed on Oct 27, 2015:  
[https://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/dhs\\_u\\_visa\\_certification\\_guide.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/dhs_u_visa_certification_guide.pdf)
- Dick, B. (2011). Action research literature 2008—2010: Themes and trends. *Action Research*, 9(2), 122-143.
- Dodge, K. A., Dishion, T. J., & Lansford, J. E. (Eds.). (2007). *Deviant peer influences in programs for youth: Problems and solutions*. Guilford Press.  
[https://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/dhs\\_u\\_visa\\_certification\\_guide.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/dhs_u_visa_certification_guide.pdf)
- Elliott, J. R., & Sims, M. (2001). Ghettos and barrios: The impact of neighborhood poverty and race on job matching among Blacks and Latinos. *Social Problems*, 48(3), 341-361.
- Ellis, L. M., & Chen, E. C. (2013). Negotiating identity development among undocumented immigrant college students: a grounded theory study. *J Couns Psychol*, 60(2), 251-264.
- Emery, M.R., C. Ginger, and J. Chamberlain (2008) Migrants, Markets, and the Transformation of Natural Resources Management: Galax Harvesting in Western North Carolina. Chapter 4 in *Latinos in the New South: Transformations of Place*. Ashgate Publishing, UK.
- Eschbach, K., Ostir, G. V., Patel, K. V., Markides, K. S., & Goodwin, J. S. (2004). Neighborhood context and mortality among older Mexican Americans: is there a barrio advantage?. *American Journal of Public Health*, 94(10), 1807-1812.

- Feagin, J. R., & Cobas, J. A. (2008). Latinos/as and white racial frame: the procrustean bed of assimilation. *Sociological Inquiry*, 78(1), 39-53.
- Fennelly, K. and M. Orfield (2008) Impediments to the Integration of Immigrants: A Case Study in the Twin Cities. Chapter 8 in *Twenty-First Century Gateways: Immigrant Incorporation in Suburban America*. A. Singer, S.W. Hardwick, and C.B. Brettell, Eds. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Firestone, J. M., & Harris, R. J. (1994). Hispanic women in Texas: An increasing portion of the underclass. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 16(2), 176-185.
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 12(2), 219-245.
- Flores, S. M. (2010a). State dream acts: The effect of in-state resident tuition policies and undocumented Latino students. *The Review of Higher Education*, 33(2), 239-283.
- Flores, S. M. (2010b). The First State Dream Act In-State Resident Tuition and Immigration in Texas. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 32(4), 435-455.
- Flores, S. M., & Oseguera, L. (2009). The community college and undocumented immigrant students across state contexts: Localism and public policy. *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, 108(1), 63-85.
- Fordham, S., & Ogbu, J. U. (1986). Black students' school success: Coping with the "burden of 'acting white'". *The urban review*, 18(3), 176-206.
- Foster-Bey, J. (2008). Do Race, Ethnicity, Citizenship and Socio-economic Status Determine Civic-Engagement? CIRCLE Working Paper# 62. *Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE)*.
- Foxen, P. (2010). Speaking out: Latino youth on discrimination in the United States. Published by the National Council of La Raza. Accessed on Jan. 21, 2016: [www.publications.nclr.org/bitstream/handle/123456789/1141/speakingout.pdf](http://www.publications.nclr.org/bitstream/handle/123456789/1141/speakingout.pdf)
- Foxen, P. (2015). Speaking out: Resilient Latino youth in their own words. Published by the National Council of La Raza. Accessed on Jan. 21, 2016: <http://www.nclr.org/publications/resilient-latino-youth-in-their-own-words>
- Frazier, J.W. and M.E. Reisinger (2008) The New South in Perspective: Observations and Commentary. Chapter 13 in *Latinos in the New South: Transformations of Place*. Ashgate Publishing, UK
- Fuligni, A. J., & Witkow, M. (2004). The postsecondary educational progress of youth from immigrant families. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 14(2), 159-183.
- Fulwood, Sam (2015). Charlotte's Shame: The Return of Racially Segregated Schools. Newsweek, posted on Sept. 4, 2015. Last accessed on Oct. 21, 2015: [http://www.newsweek.com/charlottes-shame-return-racially-segregated-schools-368826?piano\\_t=1](http://www.newsweek.com/charlottes-shame-return-racially-segregated-schools-368826?piano_t=1)
- Furuset, O., Smith, H., & Mcdaniel, P. (2015). Belonging in charlotte: multiscalar differences in local immigration politics and policies. *Geographical Review*, 105(1), 1-19.
- Gans, H. J. (1992). Second-generation decline: scenarios for the economic and ethnic futures of the post-1965 American immigrants. *Ethnic and racial studies*, 15(2), 173-192.
- Garlick, S. (2006). License to drive: Pioneering a compromise to allow undocumented immigrants access to the roads. *Seton Hall Legis. J.*, 31, 191.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays* (Vol. 5019): Basic books.
- Giddens, A. (1998). *The Third Way*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (2009). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for*

- qualitative research*. Transaction Publishers.
- Gleeson, S., & Gonzales, R. G. (2012). When do papers matter? An institutional analysis of undocumented life in the United States. *International Migration*, 50(4), 1-19.
- Glick, J. E., & White, M. J. (2004). Post-secondary school participation of immigrant and native youth: The role of familial resources and educational expectations. *Social Science Research*, 33(2), 272-299.
- Goldman Sachs. Millennials Coming of Age. Accessed on September 1, 2015: <http://www.goldmansachs.com/our-thinking/pages/millennials/>
- Gomez, A. Voices: Fast-growing Hispanic market tough to tap. Published on Feb. 28, 2014. Accessed Jan 21, 2016: [www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2014/02/27/voices-gomez-hispanic-media/5845059/](http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2014/02/27/voices-gomez-hispanic-media/5845059/)
- Gonzales, R. G. (2008). Left out but not shut down: Political activism and the undocumented student movement. *Nw. JL & Soc. Pol'y*, 3, 219.
- Gonzales, R. G. (2009). On the rights of undocumented children. *Society*, 46(5), 419-422.
- Gonzales, R. G. (2010). On the wrong side of the tracks: The consequences of school stratification systems for unauthorized Mexican students. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 85(4), 469.
- Gonzales, R. G. (2011). Learning to Be Illegal: Undocumented Youth and Shifting Legal Contexts in the Transition to Adulthood. *American Sociological Review*, 76(4), 602-619.
- Gonzales, R. G. (2011). Where Do We Go From Here Undocumented Youth and an Effort Requiring the Entire Village?
- Gonzales, R. G., & Chavez, L. R. (2012). Awakening to a Nightmare. *Current Anthropology*, 53(3), 255-281.
- Gonzales, R. G., Suárez-Orozco, C., & Dedios-Sanguinetti, M. C. (2013). No Place to Belong: Contextualizing Concepts of Mental Health Among Undocumented Immigrant Youth in the United States. *American Behavioral Scientist*.
- Graves, W., & Smith, H. A. (Eds.). (2010). *Charlotte, NC: The global evolution of a New South city* (No. 3). University of Georgia Press.
- Green, A., Shuttleworth, I., & Lavery, S. (2005). Young people, job search and local labour markets: the example of Belfast. *Urban Studies*, 42(2), 301-324.
- Gregory, D., Johnston, R., Pratt, G., Watts, M., & Whatmore, S. (2009). *The dictionary of human geography*: Wiley. com.
- Gupta, N. D. (2010). A Comment *Part of Chapter 5 in Equal Opportunities?: the labour market integration of the children of immigrants*: OECD Publisher.
- Hagan, J., & Ebaugh, H. R. (2003). Calling upon the sacred: migrants' use of religion in the migration process. *International Migration Review*, 1145-1162.
- Hall, E. T. (1976). *Beyond Culture*. Garden City, N.Y. Anchor Press.
- Haller, W., Portes, A., & Lynch, S. M. (2011). Dreams fulfilled, dreams shattered: Determinants of segmented assimilation in the second generation. *Social Forces*, 89(3), 733-762.
- Hanson, J. (2014). Marital Culture Clash. Power of Living Therapy. Last accessed Sept. 25, 2015: <http://www.powerforlivingtherapy.com/new-blog/2014/2/26/marital-culture-clash>
- Haraway, D. (1988). Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist studies*, 14(3), 575-599.
- Haraway, D.J. 1991: Simians, cyborgs and women: the reinvention of nature. London: Free Association Books
- Harden, S. B., McDaniel, P. N., Smith, H. A., Zimmern, E., & Brown, K. E. (2015). Speaking of

- Change in Charlotte, North Carolina: How Museums Can Shape Immigrant Receptivity in a Community Navigating Rapid Cultural Change. *Museums & Social Issues*, 10(2), 117-133.
- Harvey, D. (1973). *Social Justice and the City*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Harvey, D. (1996). *Justice, Nature and the geography of Difference*. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Heath, A. (2010). Chapter 4. Main Determinants of Educational and Labour Market Outcomes *Equal Opportunities?: the labour market integration of the children of immigrants* OECD Publisher.
- Helms, Ann Doss (2014) CMS poverty rate holds steady at 54 percent. Charlotte Observer, posted March 13, 2014. Last accessed on Oct. 21, 2015: <http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/local/education/article9103805.html>
- Helms, A. D. (2015) CMS board: It's time to break up concentrations of school poverty. Charlotte Observer, posted August 13, 2015. Last accessed on Oct. 21, 2015: <http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/local/education/article31029576.html>
- Hemming, P. J. (2008). Mixing qualitative research methods in children's geographies. *Area*, 40(2), 152-162.
- Hernández-León, R., & Zuñiga, V. (2002). *Mexican immigrant communities in the south and social capital: The case of Dalton, Georgia*. Working Paper. Center for Comparative Immigration Studies, UC San Diego. eScholarship University of California. Retrieved from <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/9r5749mm>
- Hill, N. E., & Torres, K. (2010). Negotiating the American dream: The paradox of aspirations and achievement among Latino students and engagement between their families and schools. *Journal of Social Issues*, 66(1), 95-112.
- Hirschman, C. (2004). The role of religion in the origins and adaptation of immigrant groups in the United States. *International Migration Review*, 1206-1233.
- Hitlin, S., Brown, J. S., & Elder, G. H. (2007). Measuring Latinos: Racial vs. ethnic classification and self-understandings. *Social Forces*, 86(2), 587-611.
- Hoefler, M. R., Nancy; and Baker, Bryan. (2012). *Estimates of the Unauthorized Immigrant Population Residing in the United States: January 2011*. Retrieved from [https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/ois\\_ill\\_pe\\_2011.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/ois_ill_pe_2011.pdf)
- Hofstede, G. (1993). Cultural constraints in management theories. *The Academy of Management Executive*, 7(1), 81-94.
- Holloway, I. (1997). *Basic concepts for qualitative research*: Blackwell Science Oxford.
- Huang, H. B. (2010). What is good action research. *Action Research*, 8(1), 93-109.
- Husman, J., & Lens, W. (1999). The role of the future in student motivation. *Educational psychologist*, 34(2), 113-125.
- Ihlanfeldt, K. (1994). The spatial mismatch between jobs and residential locations within urban areas. *Cityscape*, 1(1), 219-244.
- Ihlanfeldt, K. R., & Sjoquist, D. L. (1998). The spatial mismatch hypothesis: a review of recent studies and their implications for welfare reform. *Housing Policy Debate*, 9(4), 849-892.
- Immigration Policy Center (IPC) (2010) Local Enforcement of Immigration Laws through the 287(g) Program. Available at <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/local-enforcement-immigration-laws-through-287g-program>
- Immigration Policy Center (IPC) (2010) New Americans in the Tar Heel State: The Economic



- and Political Power of Immigrants, Latinos, and Asians, in North Carolina. Available at: <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/new-americans-tar-heel-state>
- Ioannides, Y. M., & Loury, L. D. (2004). Job information networks, neighborhood effects, and inequality. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 42(4), 1056-1093.
- Iosifides, T. (2003). Qualitative migration research: some new reflections six years later. *The Qualitative Report*, 8(3), 435-446.
- Iskander, N., & Lowe, N. (2010). Hidden talent: tacit skill formation and labor market incorporation of Latino immigrants in the United States. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 0739456X10380922.
- Jackson, P. (1983). Principles and problems of participant observation. *Geografiska Annaler. Series B. Human Geography*, 39-46.
- Jacobs, E., Masson, R. L., Harvill, R., & Schimmel, C. (2011). *Group counseling: Strategies and skills*. Cengage Learning.
- James, F. J. (1988). Persistent Urban Poverty and the Underclass: A Perspective Based on the Hispanic Experience.
- Jargowsky, P. A. (1997). *Poverty and place: Ghettos, barrios, and the American city*. Russell Sage Foundation.
- Jargowsky, P. A. (2009). Immigrants and Neighbourhoods of Concentrated Poverty: Assimilation or Stagnation? *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 35(7), 1129-1151.
- Jessop, B., Brenner, N., & Jones, M. (2008). Theorizing sociospatial relations. *Environment and planning. D, Society and space*, 26(3), 389.
- Jessor, R., & Jessor, S. L. (1977). Problem behavior and psychosocial development: A longitudinal study of youth.
- Joo, N. and R.V. Reeves (2015) How upwardly mobile are Hispanic children? Depends how you look at it. *Brookings Institute*. Posted on Nov. 10, 2015. Last accessed on Dec. 2, 2015: <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/social-mobility-memos/posts/2015/11/10-upward-mobility-hispanic-children-reeves>
- Jung, J. K., & Elwood, S. (2010). Extending the Qualitative Capabilities of GIS: Computer-Aided Qualitative GIS. *Transactions in GIS*, 14(1), 63-87.
- Kain, J. F. (1968). Housing segregation, negro employment, and metropolitan decentralization. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 82(2), 175-197.
- Kain, J. F. (1992). The spatial mismatch hypothesis: three decades later. *Housing Policy Debate*, 3(2), 371-460.
- Kao, G., & Tienda, M. (2005). Optimism and achievement: The educational performance of immigrant youth. *The new immigration: An interdisciplinary reader*, 331-343.
- Kaplan, D. H. (1998). The spatial structure of urban ethnic economies. *Urban Geography*, 19(6), 489-501.
- Kasarda, J. D. (1985). Urban change and minority opportunities. *The new urban reality*, 33, 61.
- Kasarda, J. D. (1989). Urban industrial transition and the underclass. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 501(1), 26-47.
- Kasarda, J. D., & Johnson, J. H. (2006). *The economic impact of the Hispanic population on the state of North Carolina*. Chapel Hill, NC: Frank Hawkins Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise
- Keith, M., & Pile, S. (1993). *Place and the Politics of Identity*: Psychology Press.
- Kim, C. (2012). Lost American DREAM of Undocumented Students: Understanding the

- DREAM (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors) Act. *Children & Schools*, cds041.
- Kindon, S., Pain, R., & Kesby, M. (2007). *Participatory action research approaches and methods: Connecting people, participation and place*: Routledge.
- King, K. A., & Punt, G. (2012). On the margins: Undocumented students' narrated experiences of (il)legality. *Linguistics and Education*, 23(3), 235-249.  
doi:10.1016/j.linged.2012.05.002
- Kitching, J., Smallbone, D., & Athayde, R. (2009). Ethnic Diasporas and Business Competitiveness: Minority-Owned Enterprises in London. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 35(4), 689-705. doi:10.1080/13691830902765368
- Kneebone, E. (2009). *Job Sprawl Revisited: The Changing Geography of Metropolitan Employment*. Retrieved from Washington, DC:
- Knox, P. L., & Pinch, S. (2006). *Urban social geography: an introduction*: Pearson Education.
- Kristensen, H. (1995). Social exclusion and spatial stress: the connections. *Beyond the Threshold: The Measurement and Analysis of Social Exclusion*, Policy Press, Bristol.
- Kuhn, P., & Mansour, H. (2014). Is Internet Job Search Still Ineffective?. *The Economic Journal*, 124(581), 1213-1233.
- Kuhn, P., & Skuterud, M. (2000). Job search methods: Internet versus traditional. *Monthly Lab. Rev.*, 123, 3.
- Kwan, M.-P., & Ding, G. (2008). Geo-Narrative: Extending Geographic Information Systems for Narrative Analysis in Qualitative and Mixed-Method Research\*. *The Professional Geographer*, 60(4), 443-465. doi:10.1080/00330120802211752
- Kwan, M. P. (1999). Gender, the Home-Work Link, and Space-Time Patterns of Nonemployment Activities. *Economic geography*, 75(4), 370-394.
- Landale, N. S., & Oropesa, R. S. (1995). Immigrant children and the children of immigrants: inter-and intra-ethnic group differences in the United States.
- Lefebvre, H. (1976). Reflections on the Politics of Space. Translated by M. Enders, *Antipode*, 8: 30-37.
- Lefebvre, H., (1991) *The production of space*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Lewin, K. (1946). Action research and minority problems. *Journal of Social Issues*, 2(4), 34-46.
- Ley, D. (2008). The immigrant church as an urban service hub. *Urban Studies*, 45(10), 2057-2074
- Lichter, D. T., & Johnson, K. M. (2009). Immigrant Gateways and Hispanic Migration to New Destinations<sup>1</sup>. *International Migration Review*, 43(3), 496-518.
- Liebig, T., & Schröder, L. (2010). Main findings Chapter 1 in *OECD, Equal Opportunities?: The Labour Market Integration of the Children of Immigrants*: OECD Publishing.
- Light, I. (1984). Immigrant and ethnic enterprise in North America\*. *Ethnic and racial studies*, 7(2), 195-216.
- Light, I., Sabagh, G., Bozorgmehr, M., & Der-Martirosian, C. (1994). Beyond the ethnic enclave economy. *Social Problems*, 65-80.
- Light, I. H. (1972). *Ethnic enterprise in America: Business and welfare among Chinese, Japanese, and Blacks*: University of California Pr.
- Light, I. H., & Bonacich, E. (1991). *Immigrant Entrepreneurs: Koreans in Los Angeles; 1965-1982*: University of California Pr.
- Lynch, K. (1960). *The image of the city* (Vol. 11): the MIT Press.
- Magalhaes, L., Carrasco, C., & Gastaldo, D. (2010). Undocumented migrants in Canada: a scope

- literature review on health, access to services, and working conditions. *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*, 12(1), 132-151
- Mahatmya, D., & Gring-Pemble, L. M. (2014). DREAMers and their families: A family impact analysis of the DREAM Act and implications for family well-being. *Journal of Family Studies*, 20(1), 79-87.
- Mandel, E. (1987). Marx, Karl Heinrich. *The New Palgrave Dictionary*.
- Maschi, D. (2016). Why Millennials are less religious than older Americans. Pew Research Center. Published on Jan. 8, 2016. Last accessed on Jan. 9, 2016: [www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/01/08/qa-why-millennials-are-less-religious-than-older-americans/](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/01/08/qa-why-millennials-are-less-religious-than-older-americans/)
- Maloney, C. (2015) The Student Debt Crisis Solution. *Politico Magazine*. Posted online on Oct. 4, 2015. Last accessed on Nov. 27, 2015: [www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/10/the-answer-to-the-student-loan-debt-crisis-213217](http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/10/the-answer-to-the-student-loan-debt-crisis-213217)
- Mason, K. (2015). Participatory Action Research: Coproduction, Governance and Care. *Geography Compass*, 9(9), 497-507.
- Massey, D. (2008). Development: Social and Spatial Divisions of Labor. *Reading economic geography*, 2, 111.
- Massey, D. B. (1984). *Spatial divisions of labour: social structures and the geography of production*: Macmillan London.
- Massey, D. S. (1993). Latinos, poverty, and the underclass: A new agenda for research. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 15(4), 449-475.
- Massey, D. S., & Sanchez, M. R. (2010). *Brokered Boundaries: Creating Immigrant Identity in Anti-immigrant Times*: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Mathema, S. (2013). Lessons learned from a federal-local immigration enforcement program in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina. *Poverty & Race Research Action Council*, 22(2), 3-8.
- McDaniel, P. N. (2013). *Receptivity in a new immigrant gateway: Immigrant settlement geography, public education, and immigrant integration in Charlotte, North Carolina* (Doctoral dissertation, The University of North Carolina at Charlotte).
- McDevitt, M., & Butler, M. (2011). Latino youth as information leaders: implications for family interaction and civic engagement in immigrant communities. *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies*, 7(2).
- McDowell, L. (1999). *Gender, identity and place: Understanding feminist geographies*: U of Minnesota Press.
- McGuirk, P., & O'Neill, P. (2010). Using questionnaires in qualitative human geography. In I. Hay (Ed.), *Qualitative research methods in human geography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- McIntyre, A. (2003). Through the Eyes of Women: Photovoice and participatory research as tools for reimagining place. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 10(1), 47-66.
- McMorran, C. (2012). Practising workplace geographies: embodied labour as method in human geography. *Area*, 44(4), 489-495.
- McWhirter, E. H., Ramos, K., & Medina, C. (2013). ¿Y ahora qué? Anticipated immigration status barriers and Latina/o high school students' future expectations. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 19(3), 288.
- Mehta, C., Theodore, N., Mora, I., & Wade, J. (2002). Chicago's undocumented immigrants: an analysis of wages, working conditions, and economic contributions. *Chicago, University*

- of Illinois, Center for Urban Economic Development.*
- Menjívar, C., & Bejarano, C. (2004). Latino immigrants' perceptions of crime and police authorities in the United States: A case study from the Phoenix metropolitan area. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 27(1), 120-148.
- Mullainathan, S. (2015) Racial Bias, Even When We Have Good Intentions. The New York Times. Posted on Jan. 3, 2015. Accessed on Oct 29, 2015:  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/04/upshot/the-measuring-sticks-of-racial-bias-.html>
- Mundra, K., Moellmer, A., & Lopez-Aqueres, W. (2003). Investigating Hispanic underrepresentation in managerial and professional occupations. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 25(4), 513-529.
- Murphey, D., Guzman, L., & Torres, A. M. (2014). *America's Hispanic children: Gaining ground, looking forward*. Child Trends.
- Musterd, S., & Ostendorf, W. (1998). Segregation, polarisation and social exclusion in metropolitan areas. *Urban segregation and the welfare state: Inequality and exclusion in Western cities*, 43, 1.
- National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) (2015). UNDOCUMENTED STUDENT TUITION: OVERVIEW. Published on Oct. 29, 2015. Accessed on Jan. 21, 2016:  
[www.ncsl.org/research/education/undocumented-student-tuition-overview.aspx](http://www.ncsl.org/research/education/undocumented-student-tuition-overview.aspx)
- NC Report Cards. Interactive data viewer. Last accessed Oct. 21, 2015:  
<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/src/>
- Negrón-Gonzales, G. (2013). Navigating “illegality”: Undocumented youth & oppositional consciousness. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 35(8), 1284-1290.  
doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2013.04.016
- Nielsen (2012). STATE OF THE HISPANIC CONSUMER: THE HISPANIC MARKET IMPERATIVE. Report published on April 17, 2012. Accessed on Jan. 21, 2016:  
[www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/reports/2012/state-of-the-hispanic-consumer-the-hispanic-market-imperative.html](http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/reports/2012/state-of-the-hispanic-consumer-the-hispanic-market-imperative.html)
- Oboler, S. (2012). Latino/as in the South: Immigration, integration and identity. *Latino Studies*, 10(1), 1-10.
- Odem, M. E., & Lacy, E. C. (Eds.). (2009). *Latino Immigrants and the Transformation of the US South*. University of Georgia Press.
- OECD (2010). *Equal Opportunities?: the labour market integration of the children of immigrants*/ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Publishing.
- Oguntoyinbo, Lekan (2015) The Influx of Latino Students at Historically Black Colleges. Published by The Atlantic on Sept. 29, 2015. Accessed on Jan. 17, 2016:  
[www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/09/hbcus-more-latino-students/407953/](http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/09/hbcus-more-latino-students/407953/)
- Oldrup, H. H., & Carstensen, T. A. (2012). Producing geographical knowledge through visual methods. *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, 94(3), 223-237.
- Omi, M., & Winant, H. (2014). *Racial formation in the United States*. Routledge.
- Okagaki, L., & Frensch, P. A. (1998). Parenting and children's school achievement: A multiethnic perspective. *American Educational Research Journal*, 35(1), 123-144.
- Olivas, M. A. (2009). Political Economy of the Dream Act and the Legislative Process: A Case Study of Comprehensive Immigration Reform, The. *Wayne L. Rev.*, 55, 1757.
- Olivas, M. A. (2012). Dreams Deferred: Deferred Action, Prosecutorial Discretion, and the Vexing Case (s) of DREAM Act Students. *Wm. & Mary Bill Rts. J.*, 21, 463.

- Oropesa, R. S., & Landale, N. S. (1997). In search of the new second generation: Alternative strategies for identifying second generation children and understanding their acquisition of English. *Sociological Perspectives*, 429-455.
- Pacione, M. (2003). Quality-Of-Life Research in Urban Geography. *Urban Geography*, 24(4), 314-339.
- Pager, D., & Shepherd, H. (2008). The sociology of discrimination: Racial discrimination in employment, housing, credit, and consumer markets. *Annual review of sociology*, 34, 181.
- Pager, D., Western, B., & Bonikowski, B. (2009). Discrimination in a low-wage labor market a field experiment. *American Sociological Review*, 74(5), 777-799
- Pain, R. (2003). Social geography: On action-orientated research. *Progress in Human Geography*, 27(5), 649-658.
- Pain, R. (2004). Social geography: participatory research. *Progress in Human Geography*, 28(5), 652-663. doi:10.1191/0309132504ph511pr
- Park, R., Burgess, E. W., & McKenzie, R. D. (1925). *The city: Suggestions for the study of human nature in the urban environment*: Chicago.
- Parkin, F. (1979). *Marxism and class theory: A bourgeois critique*: Tavistock London.
- Passel, J. S. a. C., D'Vera. (2011). *Unauthorized Immigrant Population: National and State Trends, 2010*. Retrieved from Washington, DC: <http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/reports/133.pdf>
- Passel, J., & Lopez, M. H. (2012). Up to 1.7 million unauthorized immigrant youth may benefit from new deportation rules. *Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center, August*. <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2012/08/14/up-to-1-7-million-unauthorizedimmigrant-youth-may-benefit-from-new-deportation-rules>.
- Peace, R. (2001). Social exclusion: A concept in need of definition?. *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, 17-36.
- Peach, C. (1996). Good segregation, bad segregation. *Planning perspectives*, 11(4), 379-398.
- Percy-Smith, J. (2000). *Policy responses to social exclusion: Towards inclusion?*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK)
- Pérez-Torres, R. (2006). *Mestizaje: Critical uses of race in Chicano culture*. U of Minnesota Press.
- Perez, Zenen Jaimes (2015) A portrait of deferred action for childhood arrivals recipients. Challenges and opportunities three years later. United we Dream. Last accessed October 2015: <http://unitedwedream.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/DACA-report-final-1.pdf>
- Perman, S. How To Tap the Hispanic Market. Published July 11, 2006. Accessed Jan. 21, 2016: [www.bloomberg.com/bw/stories/2006-07-11/how-to-tap-the-hispanic-market](http://www.bloomberg.com/bw/stories/2006-07-11/how-to-tap-the-hispanic-market)
- Perreira, K., Chapman, M., Potochnick, S., Ko, L., Smith, T., Perreira, K., Potochnick, S., Chapman, M., Perreira, K., Livas-Stein, G. and Chapman, M., (2008) Migration and mental health: Latino youth and parents adapting to life in the American south. *Final report on the Latino Migration, Health and Adaptation Study*. Carolina Population Center.
- Perreira, K. M., Fuligni, A., & Potochnick, S. (2010). Fitting in: The roles of social acceptance and discrimination in shaping the academic motivations of Latino youth in the US Southeast. *Journal of Social Issues*, 66(1), 131-153.
- Pew Hispanic Center (2013). A nation of immigrants: A portrait of the 40 million, including 11 million unauthorized. *Washington, DC: Pew Research Center*.

- Pew Research Center (2014). Millennials in Adulthood. Released March 7, 2014. Accessed September 14, 2015: <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/03/07/millennials-in-adulthood/>
- Phalet, K., Andriessen, I., & Lens, W. (2004). How future goals enhance motivation and learning in multicultural classrooms. *Educational Psychology Review*, 16(1), 59-89.
- Phillips, D. (2006) Parallel Lives? Challenging discourses of British Muslim Self-segregation. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 24: 25-40
- Ponterotto, J. G. (2006). Brief note on the origins, evolution, and meaning of the qualitative research concept "thick description". *The Qualitative Report*, 11(3), 538-549.
- Portes, Alejandro (1997) "Immigration Theory for a New Century: Some Problems and Opportunities" *International Migration Review*, Vol. 31, No. 4, Special Issue-L Immigrant Adaptation and Native-Born Responses in the Making of Americas. Pp. 799-825
- Portes, A. (1998). Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology. *Annu. Rev. Sociol.*, 24, 1-24.
- Portes, A., & Fernandez-Kelly, P. (2008). No margin for error: Educational and occupational achievement among disadvantaged children of immigrants. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 620(1), 12-36.
- Portes, A., Fernández-Kelly, P., & Haller, W. (2009). The adaptation of the immigrant second generation in America: A theoretical overview and recent evidence. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 35(7), 1077-1104.
- Portes, A., & Jensen, L. (1989). The enclave and the entrants: Patterns of ethnic enterprise in Miami before and after Mariel. *American Sociological Review*, 929-949.
- Portes, A., & Rumbaut, R. G. (1990). Immigrant America. A Portrait.
- Portes, A., & Rumbaut, R. G. (2001). *Legacies: The story of the immigrant second generation*: University of California Pr.
- Portes, A., & Rumbaut, R. G. (2006). *Immigrant America: a portrait*: Univ of California Press.
- Portes, A., & Zhou, M. (1993). The new second generation: Segmented assimilation and its variants. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 530(1), 74-96.
- Potochnick, S. R., & Perreira, K. M. (2010). Depression and anxiety among first-generation immigrant Latino youth: key correlates and implications for future research. *The Journal of nervous and mental disease*, 198(7), 470.
- Preston, V., & McLafferty, S. (1999). Spatial mismatch research in the 1990s: progress and potential\*. *Papers in Regional Science*, 78(4), 387-402.
- Prinstein, M. J., Boergers, J., & Spirito, A. (2001). Adolescents' and their friends' health-risk behavior: Factors that alter or add to peer influence. *Journal of pediatric psychology*, 26(5), 287-298.
- Provasnik, S., & Shafer, L. L. (2004). Historically Black Colleges and Universities, 1976 to 2001. ED TAB. NCES 2004-062. *National Center for Education Statistics*.
- Puckett, C., & Hargittai, E. (2012). From Dot-Edu to Dot-Com: Predictors of College Students' Job and Career Information Seeking Online. *Sociological Focus*, 45(1), 85-102.
- Ramey, D. M. (2013). Immigrant Revitalization and Neighborhood Violent Crime in Established and New Destination Cities. *Social Forces*, 92(2), 597-629. doi:10.1093/sf/sot085
- Ramos, B., Jaccard, J., & Guilamo-Ramos, V. (2003). Dual ethnicity and depressive symptoms:

- Implications of being Black and Latino in the United States. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 25(2), 147-173.
- Ray, B., & Preston, V. (2009). Geographies of discrimination: Variations in perceived discomfort and discrimination in Canada's gateway cities. *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies*, 7(3), 228-49.
- Reason, P., & Bradbury, H. (Eds.). (2001). *Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice*. Sage.
- Ridings, J. W., Piedra, L. M., Capeles, J. C., Rodríguez, R., Freire, F., & Byoun, S. J. (2010). Building a Latino youth program: Using concept mapping to identify community-based strategies for success. *Journal of Social Service Research*, 37(1), 34-49.
- Rivas, J. (2013). North Carolina Issues 'Deferred Action' Driver's Licences. *Colorlines*. Published on Feb. 19, 2013. Last accessed Nov. 29, 2015: <http://www.colorlines.com/articles/north-carolina-issues-deferred-action-drivers-licences>
- Rodriguez, R. (2007). *Latino Talent: Effective Strategies to Recruit, Retain and Develop Hispanic Professionals*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Root, M. P. (Ed.). (1995). *The multiracial experience: Racial borders as the new frontier*. Sage Publications.
- Rose, G. (1997). Situating knowledges: positionality, reflexivities and other tactics. *Progress in human geography*, 21(3), 305-320.
- Rose, G. (2008). Using photographs as illustrations in human geography. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 32(1), 151-160.
- Ruiz-de-Velasco, J., & Fix, M. (2000). Overlooked & Underserved: Immigrant Students in US Secondary Schools.
- Ruiz-Tagle, J. (2012). A Theory of Socio-spatial Integration: Problems, Policies and Concepts from a US Perspective. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*.
- Rumbaut, R. G. (2004). Ages, Life Stages, and Generational Cohorts: Decomposing the Immigrant First and Second Generations in the United States1. *International Migration Review*, 38(3), 1160-1205.
- Ruggles, S., K. Genadek, R. Goeken, J. Grover, and M. Sobek. *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 6.0* [Machine-readable database]. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2015. US Census, Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS) data. *Select variables extracted from the ACS 2010-2012 3-year, 2007-2011 5-year, 2009-2011 3-year estimates*. Available at: <https://usa.ipums.org/usa/>
- Salehi, R. (2010). Intersection of health, immigration, and youth: a systematic literature review. *J Immigr Minor Health*, 12(5), 788-797. doi:10.1007/s10903-009-9247-6
- Sanders, M. S. (2010). Hope, opportunity, and access: The in-state tuition debate in North Carolina. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 9(2), 108-125.
- Schröder, L. (2010). Chapter 5. Labour Market Characteristics and their Impact on the Integration of Immigrants' Offspring *Equal Opportunities?: The Labour Market Integration of the Children of Immigrants*: OECD Publisher.
- Schwandt, T. A. (2001). *Dictionary of qualitative inquiry*: Sage.
- Sen, A. (2000). *Social Exclusion: Concept, Application and Scrutiny*. Office of Environment and Social Development, Asian Development Bank.
- Sensis (2015). *Hispanic Millennial Project. The Role of Culture in the Lives of Multicultural Millennials*. Presentation prepared for the Latin American Chamber of Commerce 2015

- annual meeting on Nov. 18, 2015. More information at:  
<http://www.hispanicmillennialproject.com/>
- Sheppard, E. (2001). Quantitative geography: representations, practices, and possibilities. *Environment and Planning D*, 19(5), 535-554.
- Shove, E. (2002). *Rushing around: coordination, mobility and inequality*. Paper presented at the ESRC Mobile Network Meeting, Department for Transport, London, October.
- Sibley, D. (1995). *Geographies of exclusion: Society and difference in the West*. Psychology Press.
- Singer, A. (2004). The Rise of New Immigrant Gateways. Washington DC: Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy. *Brookings Institution*.
- Singer, A. (2015). *Metropolitan immigrant gateways revisited*, 2014. Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings. Washington, DC
- Smith, H. A., & Furuseth, O. J. (2004). Housing, Hispanics, and transitioning geographies in Charlotte, North Carolina. *Southeastern Geographer*, 44(2), 216-235.
- Smith, B. E. and Winders, J. (2008) 'We're here to stay': economic restructuring, Latino migration and place-making in the US South. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 33: 60-72.
- Smith, H. A., & Furuseth, O. J. (Eds.). (2006). *Latinos in the new south: Transformations of place*. Ashgate Publishing, Ltd..
- Smith, H.A. and O.J. Furuseth (2006) From Winn-Dixie to Tiendas: The Remaking of the New South. Chapter 1 in *Latinos in the New South: Transformations of Place*. Ashgate Publishing, UK.
- Smith, H.A. and D. Ley (2008) Even in Canada? Concentrated Immigrant Poverty in Gateway Cities. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 98(3): 686-713
- Smith, H.A. and O.J. Furuseth (2008) Transitioning Landscapes in the "Nuevo South": Latino Place Making and Community Building in the Middle-Ring Suburbs of Charlotte, North Carolina. Chapter 11 in *Twenty-First Century Gateways*, edited by A. Singer, S. Hardwick, and C. Bretell. Brookings Institution, Washington, DC.
- Soini, K. (2001). Exploring human dimensions of multifunctional landscapes through mapping and map-making. *Landscape and Urban planning*, 57(3), 225-239.
- Soja, E. W. (1980). The socio-spatial dialectic. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 70(2), 207-225.
- Soja, E. W. (1985). The Spatiality of Social Life: Towards a Transformative Rhetorisation. In D. Gregory and J. Urry (Eds.). (1985). *Social relations and spatial structure* (pp. 90-127). London: MacMillan.
- Soja, E.W. (1996) Thirdspace: journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Solorzano, D. G. (1998). Critical race theory, race and gender microaggressions, and the experience of Chicana and Chicano scholars. *International journal of qualitative studies in education*, 11(1), 121-136.
- Solorzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2001). Critical race and LatCrit theory and method: Counter-storytelling. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 14(4), 471-495
- Soule, Deborah L., and Amy C. Edmondson (2001) Situated knowledge and learning in dispersed teams. *British journal of management*, 13: S17-S34.
- Spencer, M. B., Noll, E., Stoltzfus, J., & Harpalani, V. (2001). Identity and school adjustment: Revisiting the "acting White" assumption. *Educational Psychologist*, 36(1), 21-30.



- Spicker, P. (1997). Exclusion. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 35(1), 133-143.
- Stamps, K., & Bohon, S. A. (2006). Educational Attainment in New and Established Latino Metropolitan Destinations. *Social Science Quarterly*, 87(5), 1225-1240.
- Stepler, R. and A. Brown (2015) Statistical Portrait of Hispanics in the United States, 1980 – 2013. Pew Research Center. Published on May 12, 2015. Accessed on Jan. 11, 2016: [www.pewhispanic.org/2015/05/12/statistical-portrait-of-hispanics-in-the-united-states-1980-2013-trends/](http://www.pewhispanic.org/2015/05/12/statistical-portrait-of-hispanics-in-the-united-states-1980-2013-trends/)
- Stoll, M. A. (1999). *Race, Space, and Youth Labor Markets*: Garland.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1994). Grounded theory methodology. *Handbook of qualitative research*, 273-285.
- Suárez-Orozco, C., Suárez-Orozco, M. M., & Suárez-Orozco, M. M. (2009). *Children of immigration*. Harvard University Press.
- Suárez-Orozco, C. and Suárez-Orozco, M. (2015). Words Matter. Published in the USA Today on Sept. 10, 2015. Accessed on Jan. 27, 2016: [www.usnews.com/opinion/articles/2015/09/10/immigration-demagogues-like-donald-trump-are-hurting-children](http://www.usnews.com/opinion/articles/2015/09/10/immigration-demagogues-like-donald-trump-are-hurting-children)
- Suro, R. and A. Singer (2002) Latino Growth in Metropolitan America: Changing Patterns, New Locations. Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy.
- Sutherland, C., & Cheng, Y. (2009). Participatory-Action Research with (Im)migrant Women in Two Small Canadian Cities: Using Photovoice in Kingston and Peterborough, Ontario. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, 7(3), 290-307.
- Taylor, K. (2013). Why Millennials Are Ending The 9 To 5. Forbes magazine. Published on Aug. 23, 2013. Accessed on Jan. 14, 2016: [www.forbes.com/sites/katetaylor/2013/08/23/why-millennials-are-ending-the-9-to-5/#2715e4857a0b41b6f59e3d75](http://www.forbes.com/sites/katetaylor/2013/08/23/why-millennials-are-ending-the-9-to-5/#2715e4857a0b41b6f59e3d75)
- Teixeira, C., & Li, W. (2009). Immigrant and refugee experiences in North American cities. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, 7(3), 221-227
- Telles, E., Sawyer, M., & Rivera-Salgado, G. (Eds.). (2011). *Just Neighbors?: Research on African American and Latino Relations in the United States*. Russell Sage Foundation.
- Terriquez, V. (2014). Trapped in the working class? Prospects for the intergenerational (im) mobility of Latino youth. *Sociological Inquiry*, 84(3), 382-411.
- The White House Council of Economic Advisors (2014) 15 economic facts about Millennials. Accessed on September 14 at: [https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/millennials\\_report.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/millennials_report.pdf)
- Thill, J.-C., & Sui, D. Z. (1993). Mental Maps and Fuzziness in Space Preferences. *The Professional Geographer*, 45(3), 264-276.
- Thornberry TP, Krohn MD. Peers, drug use, and delinquency. In: Stoff DM, Breiling J, Maser JD, editors. *Handbook of antisocial behavior*. Wiley; New York: 1997. pp. 218–233.
- Tilly, C., Moss, P., Kirschenman, J., & Kennelly, I. (2001). Space as a signal: How employers perceive neighborhoods in four metropolitan labor markets. *Urban inequality: Evidence from four cities*, 304-338.
- Torres, R.M., E.J. Popke, and H.M. Hapke (2008) The South's Silent Bargain: Rural Reconstructing, Latino Labor and the Ambiguities of Migrant Experience. Chapter 3 in *Latinos in the New South: Transformations of Place*. Ashgate Publishing, UK
- Turan, E., Çelik, E., & Turan, M. E. (2014). Perceived social support as predictors of adolescents' career exploration. *Australian Journal of Career Development*, 23(3), 119-124.

- Turner, K., Guzman, L., Wildsmith, E., & Scott, M. (2015). The complex and varied households of low-income Hispanic children. *Washington, DC: Child Trends*.
- Ueltschy, L. C., & Krampf, R. F. (2011). The influence of acculturation on advertising effectiveness to the Hispanic market. *Journal of Applied Business Research (JABR)*, 13(2), 87-102.
- U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Tables DP05, DP02, DP03, B05006; generated by J.C. Schuch; using American FactFinder; <http://factfinder2.census.gov>; created in April 2014.
- United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Naturalization Eligibility Worksheet Instructions. Department of Homeland Security. Accessed Jan 11, 2016: <http://www.uscis.gov/sites/default/files/USCIS/Resources/Citizenship%20&%20Naturalization%20Based%20Resources/A%20Guide%20to%20Naturalization/PDFs/M-480.pdf>
- United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Victims of Criminal Activity: U Nonimmigrant Status. Last updated Jan 9, 2014. Accessed on Oct. 27, 2015: <http://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/victims-human-trafficking-other-crimes/victims-criminal-activity-u-nonimmigrant-status/victims-criminal-activity-u-nonimmigrant-status>
- United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) (1997). *The State of Cities*. Last accessed April 14, 2016: <https://www.huduser.gov/publications/pdf/statecit.pdf>
- University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Office of Institutional Research. 2014-2015 enrollment data available at: <http://ir.uncc.edu/fact-book/academic-year-2014-2015>
- University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Quality of Life explorer, 2010-2013 data. Available at: <http://mcmmap.org/qol/#/p1/>
- ULead Network (2016). North Carolina Policy: In-state Tuition Policies. Last updated February 2, 2016. Last accessed April 6, 2016: [uleadnet.org/map/north-carolina-policy](http://uleadnet.org/map/north-carolina-policy)
- Van Blerk, L., & Ansell, N. (2007). Participatory feedback and dissemination with and for children: reflections from research with young migrants in southern Africa. *Children's geographies*, 5(3), 313-324.
- Varela, A. M. (2011). Creating opportunities for undocumented youth: A review of the literature. *The New Educator*, 7(1), 87-102.
- Vargas, E. D. (2010). In-state tuition policies for undocumented youth. *Harvard journal of Hispanic policy*, 23, 43.
- Vargas, M. (2012). *Unwanted Americans?: Undocumented youth with American Dreams*. (M.A.), University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, <http://span335.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/vargasthesis.pdf>.
- Villarreal, M., & Cid, M. (2008). NAFTA and the Mexican economy. *Federal Publications*, 565.
- Wacquant, L. (2007). Territorial stigmatization in the age of advanced marginality. *Thesis Eleven*, 91(1), 66-77.
- Walcott, S.M. and A. Murphy (2008) Latino Communities in Atlanta: Segmented Assimilation Under Construction. Chapter 8 in *Latinos in the New South: Transformations of Place*. Ashgate Publishing, UK
- Waldinger, R., & Lichter, M. I. (2003). *How the other half works: Immigration and the social organization of labor*: University of California Pr.
- Waldinger, R., Lim, N., & Cort, D. (2007). Bad jobs, good jobs, no jobs? The employment experience of the Mexican American second generation. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 33(1), 1-35.

- Wang, C. C. (1999). Photovoice: A participatory action research strategy applied to women's health. *Journal of Women's Health*, 8(2), 185-192.
- Wang, Q. (2010). How does geography matter in the ethnic labor market segmentation process? A case study of Chinese immigrants in the San Francisco CMSA. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 100(1), 182-201.
- Waters, M. C., & Jiménez, T. R. (2005). Assessing immigrant assimilation: New empirical and theoretical challenges. *Annual review of sociology*, 105-125.
- Weise, J. M. (2012). Dispatches from the "Viejo" New South: Historicizing recent Latino migrations. *Latino Studies*, 10(1), 41-59.
- White, M. J., & Glick, J. E. (2009). *Achieving anew: How new immigrants do in American schools, jobs, and neighborhoods*: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Wilson, W. J. (1985). Cycles of deprivation and the underclass debate. *The Social Service Review*, 541-559.
- Wilson, W. J. (1987, 2012). *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*. University of Chicago Press.
- Wilson, W. J. (1997). *When work disappears: The world of the new urban poor*: Random House Digital, Inc.
- Wilson, K. L., & Portes, A. (1980). Immigrant enclaves: An analysis of the labor market experiences of Cubans in Miami. *American journal of sociology*, 295-319.
- Wilson, M., & Gerber, L. E. (2008). How generational theory can improve teaching: Strategies for working with the "Millennials". *Currents in Teaching and Learning*, 1(1), 29-44.
- Winders, J. (2005). Changing politics of race and region: Latino migration to the US South. *Progress in Human Geography*, 29(6), 683-699.
- Yeh, C. J., Ma, P. W., Madan-Bahel, A., Hunter, C. D., Jung, S., Kim, A. B., ... & Sasaki, K. (2005). The cultural negotiations of Korean immigrant youth. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 83(2), 172-182.
- Yeager, C. D., & Steiger, T. (2013). Applied geography in a digital age: The case for mixed methods. *Applied Geography*, 39, 1-4.
- Zaroli, J. (2014) Study: Upward Mobility No Tougher In U.S. Than Two Decades Ago. Published on National Public Radio on Jan. 23, 2014. Accessed on Jan. 28, 2016: [www.npr.org/2014/01/23/265356290/study-upward-mobility-no-tougher-in-u-s-than-two-decades-ago](http://www.npr.org/2014/01/23/265356290/study-upward-mobility-no-tougher-in-u-s-than-two-decades-ago)
- Zhou, M. (1995). Low-wage employment and social mobility: the experience of immigrant Chinese women in New York City. *National Journal of Sociology*, 9(1), 1-30.
- Zhou, M. (1997a). Growing up American: The challenge confronting immigrant children and children of immigrants. *Annual review of sociology*, 63-95.
- Zhou, M. (1997b). Segmented assimilation: Issues, controversies, and recent research on the new second generation. *International Migration Review*, 975-1008.
- Zhou, M., & Xiong, Y. S. (2005). The multifaceted American experiences of the children of Asian immigrants: Lessons for segmented assimilation. *Ethnic and racial studies*, 28(6), 1119-1152.
- Zimmerman, A. M. (2011). A dream detained: Undocumented Latino youth and the DREAM movement. *NACLA Report on the Americas*, 44(6), 14-17.
- Zong, J. and J. Batalova (2015). Frequently requested statistics on immigrants and immigration in the United States. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute; 2014

## APPENDIX A: RECRUITMENT FLYERS



## Looking for research participants

Are you aged 16-21, Hispanic/Latino, and did you move to the US before the age of 13? Then you are eligible to participate in a study on how immigrant youth are accessing work.

Participation involves one questionnaire and one interview at the Latin American Coalition, and the possibility to be part of a youth-led project that aims to improve job opportunities for immigrant youth. You will be compensated for your participation. All your information will be strictly confidential!

For more information, please contact Claire at [jschuch1@uncc.edu](mailto:jschuch1@uncc.edu).





UNC CHARLOTTE

## Buscando participantes para un estudio de investigación

¿Tienes entre 16-21 años, eres hispano(a)/latino(a), y te mudaste a los EE.UU. antes de cumplir 13? Eres elegible para participar en un estudio sobre cómo los jóvenes inmigrantes encuentran trabajo. La participación incluye un cuestionario y una entrevista en la Coalición Latinoamericana, y la posibilidad de ser parte de un proyecto liderado por jóvenes enfocado en mejorar oportunidades para jóvenes inmigrantes. Será compensado por su participación. Toda la información recopilada será confidencial!

Para obtener más información, por favor manda un mensaje a Claire ([jschuch1@uncc.edu](mailto:jschuch1@uncc.edu)).



## APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORMS



# UNC CHARLOTTE

## INFORMED CONSENT FOR THE DISSERTATION PROJECT “SOCIO-SPATIAL GEOGRAPHIES OF HISPANIC IMMIGRANT YOUTH ACCESSING THE URBAN LABOR MARKET”

### Project Title and Purpose

#### Experiences of Hispanic Immigrant Youth Accessing Employment

You are invited to be part of a dissertation research project that investigates how Hispanic immigrant youth in Charlotte are accessing jobs. I will be asking you how and where you work or seek work to explore how factors like documentation status, socioeconomic status, education level, and gender impact your experiences. The goal is to provide new information about how immigrant youth navigate the labor market – for instance, what challenges they may face and how they try to overcome them. The information you provide will also be used to suggest public policies, programs, or other initiatives that can improve the overall job outcomes for Hispanic immigrant youth. All your information will be confidential and not shared with others. Ultimately, the objective is to improve access to jobs and opportunities for Hispanic immigrant youth, here in Charlotte and in other parts of the country.

### Investigator(s)

Claire Schuch

Ph.D. Student

University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Dept. of Geography and Earth Sciences

Under the supervision of:

Dr. Heather Smith

Professor and Graduate Programs Director

University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Dept. of Geography and Earth Sciences

### Eligibility

**Inclusion Criteria:** You may participate in this project if you are between the ages 16 and 21, you live in Mecklenburg County, you arrived in the US before the age of 13 but were not born in the US, and you self-identify as Hispanic.

**Exclusion Criteria:** You are ineligible to partake in this study if you have not yet reached age 16 or are older than 21, if you live outside of Mecklenburg County, if you were born in the United States or arrived in the US, if you arrived in the US after the age of 12, or if you do not self-identify as Hispanic.

### **Overall Description of Participation**

Your participation involves the completion of a questionnaire and a one-on-one interview on the same day. The interview will be audio recorded. The interview is semi-structured, which means I have a list of questions (you may see them if you like) that I use as a guideline but I will also ask follow-up questions based on your answers. I will be asking questions about you, your household, and your neighborhood as they relate to your experiences as part of the labor force. I will also be asking you to point out your approximate place of residence and work on a map.

If you wish to also partake in a group participatory research project, as part of this study, you will work together with a small group of other Hispanic youth to decide on and execute a project and journal/mental mapping component related to youth job access. The meetings will be video recorded. Further details about this project will be provided if you chose to be part of this.

There are no right or wrong answers. As a member of the community, I value your opinions and stories. You are an integral part of this research project and I thank you for your participation.

### **Length of Participation and Compensation**

The questionnaire is 3 pages long and the interview will last approximately 1-1.5 hour(s). Both will take place at the Latin American Coalition (LAC), or at another location that is convenient and private. To compensate you for your time, you will receive a \$25 gift card after you complete the questionnaire and interview.

If you are also interested in getting involved with the group project, your time commitment will be an additional three months approximately. We will meet about 8-10 times for about 2 hours at the LAC. During these three months, you will journal and draw a mental map in your own time a few times a week for a period of one month. Each journal entry may take 15-30 minutes, depending on how much time you wish to spend on it. To compensate you for your time, you will receive a \$100 gift card at the last meeting. To receive your gift card, you may not miss more than two meetings.

### **Risks and Benefits of Participation**

Risks: Though there are no foreseeable risks if you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked personal information which will be used as part of this study. I will protect this information (see ‘Confidentiality Statement’).

Unforeseeable risks: Some of the questions may cause psychological discomfort because they ask about your personal experiences with regard to you accessing work, including your social support, documentation status, and education. The questions used in the questionnaire and interview were pre-tested to ensure they were appropriate. That said, if at any point in time you wish to skip a question or no longer be part of this study, you are free to do so.

Benefits: Potential benefits to you are that you may learn something new about yourself or reflect on topics you have never thought about. In addition, your suggestions to improve work opportunities for Hispanic immigrant youth may be taken into account by government and non-government agencies. Lastly, you are contributing to a growing movement on immigrant rights that can educate people, change policies, and inform new research projects.

Your participation in the optional group project may improve your job opportunities and/or those of other immigrant youth. You will meet new people and share job seeking strategies. Your ability to work in a team and communicate effectively – skills required by most jobs – may be improved. You will receive food when we meet to discuss the journals. You will also receive an

official UNC Charlotte letter of completion at the end that you may use when you are applying for colleges or jobs.

### **Volunteer Statement**

You are a volunteer. The decision to participate in this study is completely up to you. If you decide to be in the study, you may stop at any time. You will not be treated any differently if you decide not to participate in the study or if you stop once you have started.

### **Confidentiality Statement**

Any information, including your identity and other personal details you chose to share, is completely confidential. The following steps will be taken to ensure this confidentiality:

- The files with your audio recorded interview and the questionnaire data will not contain your name. Your personal contact information will be stored in an excel spreadsheet separate from the other information you provide during the interview.
- The audio of your interview will be transcribed (typed out) to have a written documentation of what was said. The transcript with your interview will not contain your name or any other identifiable information.
- The audio files, questionnaires, and transcripts will be saved on an external hard drive in a locked research office. The maps and the hard drive will be placed in a locked drawer in the researcher's office and will not leave this office once brought there. When not in use, the hard drive will be locked in a cabinet in the office. This ensures that only the researcher will be able to access this data.
- If you choose to partake in the group project, please note that our session will be video-recorded and we may take pictures. Your name will not be linked to any of those pictures or video files. The pictures and video files will also be saved on the hard drive and locked in the cabinet in the researcher's office at UNC Charlotte.

### **Statement of Fair Treatment and Respect**

UNC Charlotte wants to make sure that you are treated in a fair and respectful manner. Contact the university's Research Compliance Office (704-687-1871; [uncc-irb@uncc.edu](mailto:uncc-irb@uncc.edu)) if you have questions about how you are treated as a study participant. If you have any questions about the actual project or study, please contact Claire Schuch (704-687-5983, [jschuch1@uncc.edu](mailto:jschuch1@uncc.edu)) or Dr. Heather Smith (704-687-5989; [heatsmit@uncc.edu](mailto:heatsmit@uncc.edu)).

This form was approved for use by the UNC Charlotte Institutional Review Board on April 9, 2014 for use for one year.

**Participant Consent** - *for participants who are at least 18 years of age or who are emancipated minors as defined by law. Emancipated Minor (as defined by NC General Statute 7B-101.14) is a person who has not yet reached their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and meets at least one of the following criteria: 1) has legally terminated custodial rights of his/her parents and been declared 'emancipated' by the court; 2) is married; or 3) is serving in the armed forces of the United States.*

I have read the information in this consent form. I have had the chance to ask questions about this study, and those questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I am at least 18 years of age, and I agree to participate in this research project. I understand that I will receive a copy of this form after it has been signed by me and the principal investigator of this research study.

---



Participant Name (PRINT)

DATE

Participant Signature

Investigator Signature

DATE

i. *OR:* Parental Consent (*for participants younger than age 18*)

I have read the information in this consent form. I have had the chance to ask questions about this study and about my child's participation in the study. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I am at least 18 years of age, and I agree to allow my child to participate in this research project. I understand that I will receive a copy of this form after it has been signed by me and the principal investigator of this research study.

Child's Name (PLEASE PRINT)

Parent's Name (PLEASE PRINT)

DATE

Parent's Signature

Investigator Signature

DATE



Formulario de Consentimiento para la Universidad de Carolina del Norte de Charlotte (UNC Charlotte)

**Consentimiento para el proyecto de tesis doctoral “Geografías sociales y espaciales de los jóvenes inmigrantes hispanos entrando al mercado laboral urbano”**

### **Título y Objetivo del Proyecto**

Experiencias de los jóvenes hispanos/latinos al buscar empleo

Usted está invitado de ser parte de un proyecto de investigación sobre cómo los jóvenes inmigrantes hispanos en Charlotte están accediendo a empleos. Le pediré información sobre cómo y dónde usted trabaja o si está buscando trabajo, para identificar cómo factores como el estado migratorio, el nivel socioeconómico, el nivel educativo, y el género afectan sus experiencias. El objetivo es encontrar nueva información sobre cómo los jóvenes inmigrantes

navegan el mercado laboral - por ejemplo, cuáles son los desafíos que pueden enfrentar y cómo podemos superarlos. La información que usted provea será utilizada también para sugerir políticas públicas, programas u otras iniciativas que pueden mejorar el acceso a trabajo para los jóvenes inmigrantes hispanos. Toda su información será confidencial y no será compartida con otras personas. Finalmente, el propósito es mejorar el acceso a empleos y oportunidades para los jóvenes, aquí en Charlotte y en otras partes del país.

**Investigadora:**

Claire Schuch

Estudiante doctoral (PhD)

Universidad de Carolina del Norte en Charlotte, Departamento de Geografía y Ciencias de la Tierra

**Bajo de la supervisión de:**

Dr. Heather Smith

Profesor y Director de los Programas de Postgrado en la Universidad de Carolina del Norte en Charlotte, Departamento de Geografía y Ciencias de la Tierra

**Elegibilidad**

Criterios de inclusión: Usted puede participar en este proyecto si tiene entre 16 y 21 años de edad, si vive en el Condado de Mecklenburg, si llegó a los EE.UU. antes de cumplir los 13, pero no nació en los EE.UU., y si se identifica como hispano/a o latino/a.

Criterios de exclusión: Usted no es elegible para participar en este estudio si usted tiene menos de 16 años o más de 21 años, si usted vive afuera del Condado de Mecklenburg, si usted nació en los EE.UU. o llegó a los EE.UU. después de cumplir 13 años, o si no se identifica como hispano/a o latino/a.

**Descripción general de su participación**

Su participación incluye completar un cuestionario y una entrevista uno a uno en el mismo día. La entrevista será grabada. La entrevista es de tipo semi-estructurada; eso significa que le haré una serie de preguntas (es posible verlas si quiere) que utilizo como guía para nuestra conversación, pero también puedo hacerle otras preguntas basándome en sus respuestas. Le preguntaré sobre usted, su hogar y el área donde usted vive en relación con sus experiencias en el ámbito laboral. También le pediré identificar sobre el mapa dónde usted vive y dónde usted trabaja en un mapa. No hay respuestas correctas o incorrectas. Como miembro de la comunidad, valoro sus opiniones e historias. Usted es una parte integral de este estudio y le doy gracias por su participación.

**Duración y compensación de su participación**

El cuestionario es 3 páginas y la entrevista durará aproximadamente 1 a 1.5 hora(s). Ambas ocurrirán en la Coalición Latinoamericana (LAC), o en otro lugar decidido y conveniente para usted. Para compensarle por su tiempo, recibirá una tarjeta de regalo de \$25 después del cuestionario y la entrevista.

Si usted está interesado/a en involucrarse con otra parte del proyecto con un grupo de jóvenes, su participación durará aproximadamente tres meses. Nos reuniremos entre 8-10 veces, por dos

horas cada vez, en la Coalición. Durante estos tres meses, usted va a escribir en un diario y dibujar un mapa en su propio tiempo unas veces por semana por un periodo de un mes. Cada entrada puede tardar 15-30 minutos, dependiente en cuanto tiempo desea pasar en esta actividad. Para compensarle por su tiempo, recibirá una tarjeta de regalo de \$100 en la última reunión. Para recibir su tarjeta, no puede faltar más de dos reuniones.

### **Riesgos y beneficios de la participación**

Riesgos: Aunque no hay riesgos previsibles de su participación en este estudio, le pediré información personal que se utilizará como parte de este estudio. Voy a proteger esta información (véase "Declaración de confidencialidad").

Riesgos imprevisibles: Algunas de las preguntas pueden causar incomodidad psicológica porque son acerca sus experiencias personales con respecto al acceso a los trabajos, incluido su apoyo social, su estado migratorio, y su nivel de educación. Las preguntas utilizadas en el cuestionario y la entrevista fueron sometidas a pruebas preliminares para asegurarse de ser apropiadas. Sin embargo, si hay algún momento en que desea omitir una pregunta o dejar de ser parte de este estudio, usted está libre de hacerlo.

Beneficios: Los beneficios potenciales para usted es que puede aprender algo nuevo acerca de usted o reflexionar sobre temas que nunca ha pensado. Además, sus sugerencias para mejorar las oportunidades de trabajo para los jóvenes inmigrantes hispanos pueden ser tomadas en cuenta por organizaciones y por el gobierno. Por último, usted está contribuyendo a un creciente movimiento de derechos para inmigrantes que puede educar personas, cambiar leyes, e informar otros estudios.

Su participación en el proyecto opcional podría mejorar sus oportunidades laborales y/o las de otros jóvenes inmigrantes. Conocerá a otras personas y compartir estrategias para encontrar trabajo. Su habilidad de comunicar y trabajar en un equipo – habilidades necesarias por muchos empleos – puede mejorar. Recibirá comida cuando juntamos para discutir los diarios. También recibirá una carta oficial de UNC Charlotte al final del proyecto para usar por una solicitud de admisión a la universidad o una aplicación de empleo.

### **Declaración voluntaria**

Usted es un voluntario/a. La decisión de participar en este estudio es totalmente suya. Si usted decide participar en el estudio, puede finalizar su participación en cualquier momento durante el estudio. Usted no será tratado de una manera diferente si usted decide no participar en el estudio.

### **Declaración de confidencialidad**

Cualquier información, incluyendo su identidad y otros detalles personales que quiere compartir, es completamente confidencial. Tomaré las siguientes medidas para asegurar dicha confidencialidad:

- Los archivos junto con el audio grabado de la entrevista y los datos del cuestionario no incluirán su nombre. Su información personal será guardada en una hoja de Excel separada de la otra información que usted proporcione durante la entrevista.
- El audio de la entrevista será transcrito para tener una documentación escrita de nuestra conversación. La transcripción de la entrevista no contendrá su nombre o cualquier otra información de identificación.
- Los archivos de audio, cuestionarios y transcripciones se guardarán en un disco duro en una oficina cerrada de investigación. Los mapas y el disco duro estarán cerrados bajo llave en un

cajón en la oficina de la investigadora y no se sacaran de la oficina de investigación. Cuando no está en uso, el disco duro se bloqueará en un armario en la oficina. Esto asegura que sólo la investigadora será capaz de acceder a estos datos.

- Si elige participar en el proyecto, las sesiones serían filmadas y podemos tomar fotografías. Su nombre no estará conectado a las imágenes o archivos de video. Las fotos y los archivos de video también serán guardados en el disco duro y cerrados en un cajón en la oficina de la investigadora en UNC Charlotte.

### **Declaración de trato justo y respeto**

La Universidad de Carolina del Norte de Charlotte quiere asegurarse que usted sea tratado de una manera justa y respetuosa. Contacte a la Oficina de Cumplimiento de Investigación de la universidad (704-687-1871; [uncc-irb@uncc.edu](mailto:uncc-irb@uncc.edu)) si tiene preguntas acerca de cómo se le trata como un participante en el estudio. Si usted tiene alguna pregunta sobre este proyecto, por favor póngase en contacto con Claire Schuch (704-687-5983, [jschuch1@uncc.edu](mailto:jschuch1@uncc.edu)) o Dr. Heather Smith (704-687-5989; [heatsmit@uncc.edu](mailto:heatsmit@uncc.edu)).

Este formulario fue aprobado del Consejo Institucional de la Universidad de Carolina del Norte de Charlotte en el 9 de abril, 2014 para el uso por un año.

**Participante Consentimiento** - *para los participantes que hayan cumplido 18 años de edad o son menores de edad emancipados como lo define la ley. Un menor emancipado/a (definido por el Estatuto General de Carolina del Norte 7B 101.14) es una persona que todavía no han cumplido 18 años pero satisface uno o más de los criterios siguientes: 1) ha terminado legalmente los derechos de custodia de sus padres y ha sido declarado 'emancipado' por el tribunal; 2) está casado/a; o 3) está sirviendo en las fuerzas armadas de los Estados Unidos.*

He leído la información de este formulario de consentimiento. He tenido la oportunidad de hacer preguntas acerca de este estudio, y esas preguntas han sido contestadas a mi satisfacción. Tengo por lo menos 18 años de edad, y yo estoy de acuerdo en participar en este proyecto de investigación. Entiendo que recibiré una copia de este formulario después de que haya sido firmado por mí y la investigadora principal de este estudio.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Nombre del participante

\_\_\_\_\_  
FECHA

\_\_\_\_\_  
Firma del participante

\_\_\_\_\_  
Firma de la Investigadora

\_\_\_\_\_  
FECHA

### **i. O: El consentimiento de los padres (para los participantes menores de 18 años)**

He leído la información de este formulario de consentimiento. He tenido la oportunidad de hacer preguntas sobre este estudio y sobre la participación de mi hijo/a en el estudio. Mis preguntas han sido contestadas a mi satisfacción. Tengo por lo menos 18 años de edad, y estoy de acuerdo que mi hijo/a participe en este proyecto de investigación. Entiendo que recibiré una copia de este formulario después de que haya sido firmado por mí y la investigadora principal de este estudio.

Nombre del participante (de su hijo/a)	FECHA
Nombre del padre/de la madre (suyo/a)	FECHA
Firma del padre/de la madre (suyo/a)	
Firma de la Investigadora	FECHA

## APPENDIX C: ASSENT FORM FOR MINORS



(For subjects under the age of 18 unless emancipated\*)

My name is Claire Schuch and I am a Ph.D. student at The University of North Carolina at Charlotte. I am doing a study to how Hispanic immigrant youth in Charlotte are accessing jobs.

Your participation involves the completion of a questionnaire and a one-on-one interview on the same day. The interview will be audio recorded. The interview is semi-structured, which means I have a list of questions (you may see them if you like) that I use as a guideline but I will also ask follow-up questions based on your answers. I will be asking questions about you, your household, and your neighborhood as they relate to your experiences as part of the labor force. I will also be asking you to point out your approximate place of residence and work on a map. To compensate you for your time, you will receive a \$25 gift card after you complete the questionnaire and interview.

If you wish to also partake in a group participatory research project, as part of this study, you will work together with a small group of other Hispanic youth to decide on and complete a project and journal/mental mapping component related to youth job access. The sessions will be video recorded and we may take pictures. Further details about this project will be provided if you chose to be part of this. To compensate you for your time, you will receive a \$100 gift card at the last meeting. To receive your gift card, you may not miss more than two meetings.

I will do my best to keep all your information confidential by saving everything on a secured hard drive and in a locked cabinet in my locked research office at UNC Charlotte. Your name will not be connected to your questionnaire form, audio file, or any of the videos and pictures.

There are no right or wrong answers. As a member of the community, I value your opinions and stories. You are an integral part of this research project and I thank you for your participation. You can ask questions at any time. You do not have to be in the study. If you start the study, you can stop any time you want.

By participating in this study, you may learn something new about yourself or reflect on topics you have never thought about. In addition, your suggestions to improve work opportunities for Hispanic immigrant youth may be taken into account by government and non-government agencies. Lastly, you are contributing to a growing movement on immigrant rights that can educate people, change policies, and inform new research projects.

When I am done with the study I will write a report. I will not use your name in the report. If you want to be in this study, please sign your name.

---

Signature of Participant

---

Date

---

Signature of Investigator

---

Date

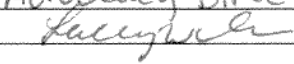
Emancipated Minor (as defined by NC General Statute 7B-101.14) is a person who has not yet reached their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday and meets at least one of the following criteria: 1) has legally terminated custodial rights of his/her parents and has been declared 'emancipated' by a court; 2) is married, or 3) is serving in the armed forces of the United States.

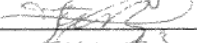
## APPENDIX D: LETTER FROM COMMUNITY PARTNER


To: UNC Charlotte Institutional Review Board

From: The Latin American Coalition (LAC)

By signing below, we acknowledge that we will assist the investigator(s) in the conduct of work outlined in the proposal titled "Socio-spatial Geographies of Hispanic Immigrant Youth Accessing the Urban Labor Market" with Johanna Claire Schuch as the Principal Investigator. We commit to making available the space for participant recruitment, questionnaires, interviews, and the Participatory Action Research (PAR) project to take place, as designated in the proposal.

Name: Lacey Williams  
 Position: Advocacy Director  
 Signature:   
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: Elver Barridos  
 Position: Community Organizer  
 Signature:   
 Date: Feb. 03. 14

Name: Megan Walsh  
 Position: Youth Development Coordinator  
 Signature:   
 Date: Feb. 3/2014



## APPENDIX E: MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

### **Memorandum of Understanding between community partner and researcher**

#### Purpose

The purpose of this memorandum of understanding is to establish the roles, responsibilities and expectations within the partnership between the Latin American Coalition (LAC) and Claire Schuch.

Claire is a Ph.D. Candidate at UNC Charlotte, conducting her dissertation research on Hispanic immigrant youth accessing the labor market. The goal of the study is to better understand how youth are transitioning into the work force in Charlotte-Mecklenburg and how we can improve their access to jobs and opportunities.

Lacey Williams is the Advocacy Director at the LAC. Megan Walsh is the Youth Development Coordinator at the LAC. Elver Barrios is a Community Organizer, working with youth at the LAC.

#### Responsibilities of the Parties

Claire will create a flyer recruiting participants for her study. This flyer will be distributed to the LAC and the U4TD youth group. She will speak to the U4TD youth to see if any of them are interested in participating, and if they can help distribute flyers or provide suggestions as to where to recruit. Claire is responsible for all communications about the study, including scheduling of the interviews and group project gathering. She will conduct all questionnaires and interviews, and facilitate the Participatory Action Research (PAR) meetings. She will provide consent forms, gift cards to compensate youth for their participation, and all supplies needed to execute the data collection (handouts, recorders, etc.). Claire will maintain communication with Lacey, Megan, and Elver about reserving space at the LAC and study findings.

Lacey, Megan, and Elver are asked to assist in recruitment by hanging Claire's flyer in the youth room, providing access to the U4TD youth group, and spreading the word to eligible participants. They will provide a private space in the LAC for the one-on-one interviews and the group project meetings so that confidentiality is maintained. Approximately 45 questionnaires and interviews will be scheduled August – December, 2014. Each session will last about two hours. Lacey, Megan, and Elver will also help secure space of the Participatory Action Research (PAR) meetings. There will be approximately 10 meetings January – April, 2014. Each gathering will last about 2-3 hours.

## APPENDIX F: QUESTIONNAIRE

**Participant Questionnaire**

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. There are no right or wrong answers. If a question is unclear, please ask me for clarification. You are free to skip a question if you are not comfortable answering it. Thank you for your participation.

Demographics

1. Age: \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is the zip code of your current address? \_\_\_\_\_ (please place a red dot of the approximate location of your home on the map attached, back page)
3. Where were you born? (country) \_\_\_\_\_
4. How long have you been living in the US? \_\_\_\_\_ years
5. What is your immigration status?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. How long have you lived here in Charlotte? \_\_\_\_\_ (in months or years)
7. Where did you live before coming to Charlotte? (Please name all places and length of time at each place.)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Household and Family

8. Who do you live with?  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Where were your parents born? \_\_\_\_\_
10. What is the highest educational level your parents completed? (Circle the answer – leave blank if you do not know)

Mother:

- a) Elementary school or equivalent
- b) Middle school or equivalent
- c) High school or equivalent
- d) College or equivalent
- e) Graduate degree

Father:

- a) Elementary school or equivalent
- b) Middle school or equivalent
- c) High school or equivalent
- d) College or equivalent
- e) Graduate degree

11. How would you describe the level of English your parents have? (Circle the answer)

Mother:

- a) Fluent
- b) Intermediate
- c) Basic
- d) None

Father:

- a) Fluent
- b) Intermediate
- c) Basic
- d) None

12. If employed, what occupation do your parents currently have?

Mother: \_\_\_\_\_ Father: \_\_\_\_\_

13. How would you describe the economic situation of your household? (Circle the answer that you feel best describes it)

- a) low-income
- b) lower-middle income
- c) middle class or average income
- d) upper-middle income
- e) upper class or high income

#### Education

14. Are you currently in school? Yes/No

a. If yes, what level and which school?

b. If no, what is your highest degree of education and which school did you last attend?

15. What do you think will be the highest degree you will obtain?

- a) no degree
- b) high school diploma or GED
- c) college degree
- d) graduate degree

#### Employment

16. Do you have a job? Yes/No

a. If so, where? Please place a blue dot of the approximate location of your job on the map attached. (If it is outside Mecklenburg County, see the Metropolitan Statistical Area map)

b. Do you have a driver's license? Yes/No

c. How do you get to work?

- a) I walk
- b) I drive
- c) Someone drives me
- d) I take the bus
- e) Other: \_\_\_\_\_

d. How long does it take to get to work? \_\_\_\_\_

e. What is your hourly or monthly wage? \_\_\_\_\_

f. If you do not currently have a job, are you searching for work at the moment? Yes/No

17. How many (other) jobs have you had in your life? \_\_\_\_\_

a. How many of these jobs were in Charlotte? \_\_\_\_\_

i. Please place a green dot of the approximate location of your previous jobs.

### Networks

18. On a scale of 1-5 (5 being most likely, 1 being least likely) how likely are you to:

- Search for jobs online? \_\_\_\_
- Ask your friends about job opportunities? \_\_\_\_
- Ask your parents about job opportunities? \_\_\_\_
- Ask other family members about job opportunities? \_\_\_\_
- Ask school teachers or staff about job opportunities? \_\_\_\_
- Ask people in your neighborhood about job opportunities? \_\_\_\_
- Move to another city/place for work? \_\_\_\_

19. Do you think the following factors have a positive (+), a negative (-), or a neutral (0, neither positive nor negative) effect on your ability to get the job you want?

- |                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| ____ Your ethnicity            | ____ Your socioeconomic status              |
| ____ Your country of origin    | ____ The neighborhood in which you live     |
| ____ Being bilingual           | ____ Your personality                       |
| ____ Being bicultural          | ____ Your connections (the people you know) |
| ____ Your age                  | ____ Local policies                         |
| ____ Your education level      | ____ State (NC) policies                    |
| ____ Your documentation status | ____ Federal policies                       |
| ____ Your gender               |   |

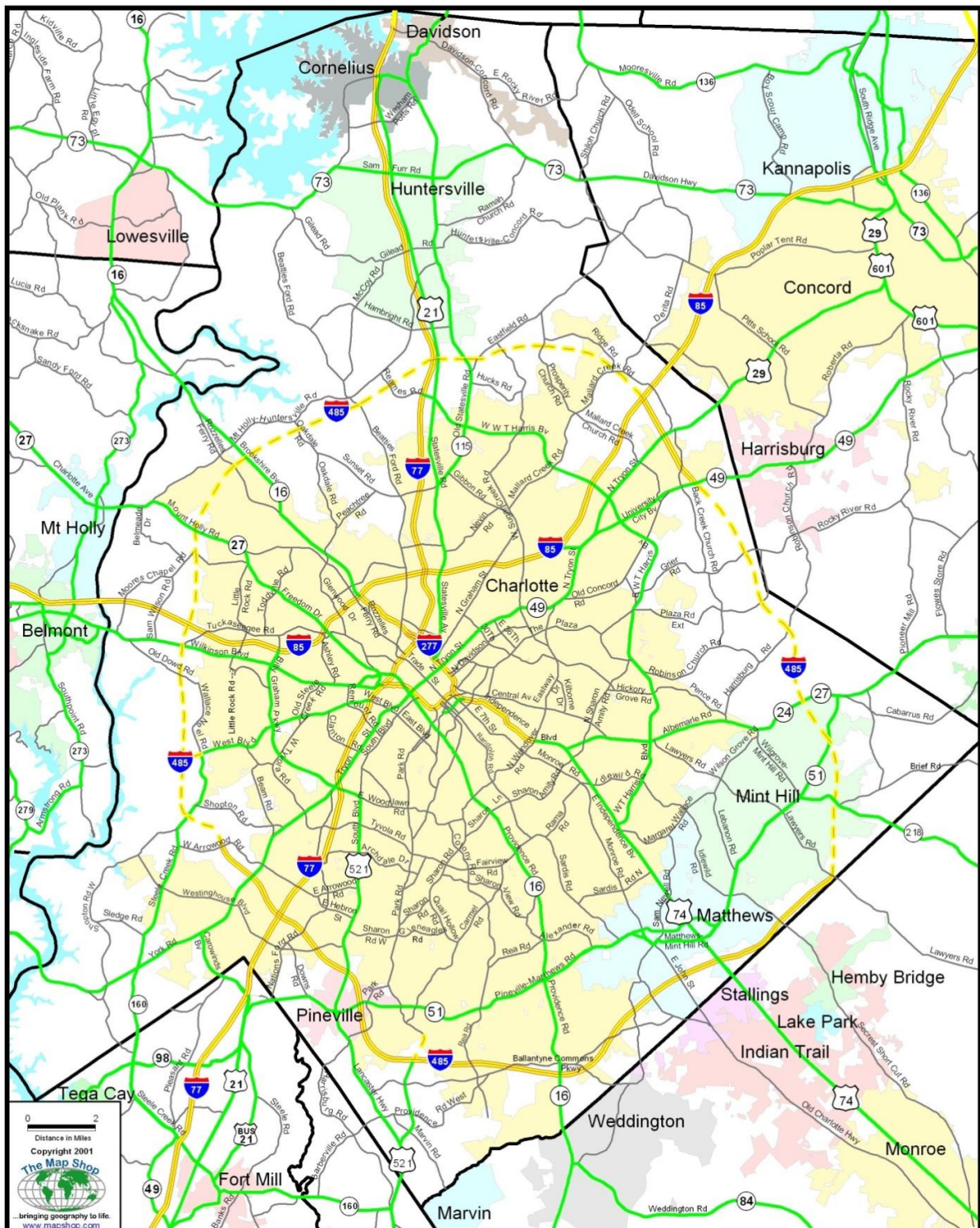
a. Are there other things you think positively impact your chances to get the job you want?

b. Are there other things you think negatively impact your chances to get the job you want?

---

This is the end of the questionnaire. Thank you for your time ☺ We will now continue with the interview.

## Charlotte-Mecklenburg map



Source: Mecklenburg County, North Carolina: Genealogy & History Directory Page. Available at: <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ncmeckle/meck2001.jpg>. Page last updated on February 6, 2011.

## APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW GUIDE

[Researcher will read the questionnaire answers and have them in hand to refer to while conducting the interview. Briefly remind the participant of the study questions, goals, and confidentiality. Option is given to video or audio record. The map the individual used to point out places in the questionnaire will be used again here to ask follow-up questions.]

Employment

We will start off by talking about any jobs you have or had.

1. **Follow up on current employment questions.** For instance, if employed: What led you there? (e.g. interests, goals, only option). If unemployed and searching, where and how they are searching? If unemployed and not searching, ask why they are not searching and if they have searched in the past (maybe a paid position is not available and they do volunteer work instead).
  - a. Who helps you when you apply for jobs? (e.g. family, friends, neighbors, school counselors, community organization representative, job agency). How do they help you? Where are they located? (map)
  - b. What was the application process like? (e.g.: Did you have an interview (phone or in person) as part of the job application process? How did it go? Is there anything that stood out about this experience? Did you end up getting the job? Why (not) do you think?
2. **Follow up about previous work experience.** What other work experience have you had, if any? Ask how they found it and how it went.
3. **What would your dream job look like? Why?**
  - a. What are you doing to get there?
  - b. Is there anything you think would hinder you in obtaining that job? What would make it easier for you to get the job that you want?
  - c. Do you feel any pressure from family, friends, or society in general to get a certain job? Explain.

Factors involved in your employment strategies and outcomes

4. **Follow up on questionnaire Q19 about factors that have a positive (+), a negative (-), or a neutral (0) effect on their ability to get the job they want –** Ask for reasons why. This provides an opportunity to talk more in depth about ethnicity, age, education, documentation status, gender, neighborhood of residence, socioeconomic status, as well as feelings of inclusion or exclusion. For instance, how does your documentation status impact where and how you look for work? Do youth face assumptions that are being made about their capabilities to perform certain jobs of assumptions about their documentation status based on their ethnicity? When discussing policies, ask which policies and what they know about them.
5. What do you think are some of the **challenges faced by Hispanic immigrant youth today, in Charlotte specifically or in the US in general?**
  - a. What about unique opportunities or positive characteristics of this group? (e.g. bicultural, bilingual, hard-working).

Broader trends and solutions

Let's talk about change.

6. **What would improve your job opportunities?** (ask about what they could do but also what they think could be done by schools, organizations, legislators, etc. at the neighborhood, state, and federal level).
7. Lastly, is there **anything I forgot to ask or you want to mention on this topic?**  
**Is there anyone else you know that I should talk to?**

Explain what will happen next (other interviews, what will happen with results, second part of study, etc.). Ask if they have any interest in participating in a participatory project as part of this study and what they would entail.

Email and phone number (most likely to be active throughout 2014):

---

Your contact information will remain confidential and will only be used for communicating information about a follow-up project and the research findings.

Thank you for your participation!

## APPENDIX H: LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS + LIST OF RESOURCES

**Letter to interview participants, 11/29/2014**

Dear .....,

Thank you for participating in my study about Hispanic/Latino youth work experiences and job access! During the past 3 months, I have interviewed 36 young adults in Charlotte. I am very grateful for your willingness to talk to me so candidly about topics that can be complicated and personal. I am amazed by you.

Attached is a copy of your consent form and a brief report summarizing the main findings of the interviews and questionnaires. In this summary, I made some generalizations, so you might recognize yourself in some statements more than others.

To hear more about the results and learn about the next phase of the project, please join me on **Wednesday, December 10, 5.30-7pm at the Latin American Coalition** (4938 Central Avenue, Charlotte NC 28205).

5.30-6pm: Introductions and a chance to meet other youth. Refreshments will be provided.

6-6.15pm: Overview of the main results from all the interviews and questionnaires.

6.15-6.30pm: Questions and discussion about the results.

6.30-6.45pm: What's next? You can be involved with Participatory Action Research (PAR)\*

6.45-7pm: Remaining questions

\*You will work together with other youth to decide on and complete a project focused on improving youth job access and their position in the labor market. The exact nature of the project will be informed by the interview results and participants' (your) suggestions. We will meet at the LAC 10 times for about 2 hours during January-March, 2015 (exact schedule depends on your availability). Snacks will be provided. To compensate you for your time, you will receive a \$100 gift card at the last meeting.

If you are interested in maybe participating in the youth-led project as part of this study, please try to attend this session so you can receive more information (but even if you don't, I'd still love to see you at the upcoming gathering). If you wish to participate in the group project but cannot attend this upcoming meeting, please let me know.

Once the PAR project has been completed, I would also like to set up some community presentations with schools and organizations in Charlotte to present them our findings. It would be great to have some of you co-present so I will be contacting you next year to see if you are interested in that (if your number or address change and you want to say updated, please send me your new contact info).

I am also including a list of resources that might be useful for you.



I hope to see you on December 10th! **Please email or text me by Dec. 8 whether or not you can make it so I know how many people to expect.**

Thanks again for your involvement.

Keep up all the great things you are doing and I hope you stay in touch.

Un abrazo,  
Claire

Ph.D. Candidate | UNC Charlotte | Jschuch1@uncc.edu | 704-687-5983 (office) | 651-434-0101 (cell)  
Research Assistant Social Determinants of Health | Carolinas Medical Center  
Mecklenburg Area Partnership for Primary care Research (MAPPR): [mapprnc.org](http://mapprnc.org)

Some resources that might be helpful (if you would like an electronic copy of this document, please email me):

- **Latin American Coalition (LAC).** “La Coalición is a community of Latin Americans, immigrants and allies that promotes full and equal participation of all people in the civic, economic and cultural life of North Carolina through education, celebration and advocacy” ([www.latinamericancoalition.org/](http://www.latinamericancoalition.org/)). Services include ESL, computer basics, financial literacy, basic workforce development, small business development, and labor rights. A weekly Workforce Development class is offered every Wednesday at 9:30am. The Job Bank and technology center services are available Monday, 1-4pm, Tuesday-Thursday, 9am-4pm. No appointment is necessary. For additional information please contact Luisa Dexheimer call 704-531-3849. The LAC also offers information about applying for DACA, deferred action for parents, and citizenship.

- **College Access Para Todos (CAPT).** CAPT is a LAC initiative that provides information about access to higher education for everyone (find CAPT on Facebook). **Contact Megan Walsh:** [mwalsh@latinamericancoalition.org](mailto:mwalsh@latinamericancoalition.org); 704-941-6730 (office).

- **United 4 the Dream**, a youth activist group at the LAC advocating for the rights of immigrant youth and their families (find U4TD on Facebook).

- **United We Dream**, the “largest national immigrant youth-led organization fighting for relief & fair treatment for all undocumented immigrants” (<http://unitedwedream.org/>).

- **Get in-state tuition at CPCC!** NC Community Colleges Offer In-State Tuition Rate for DACA-approved Employees of NC Businesses:  
<http://www.latinamericancoalition.org/blog/259/nc-community-colleges-in-state-tuition>

- Place to find **local hourly jobs:** [www.snagajob.com](http://www.snagajob.com).

- **Apprenticeship 2000.** A 4-year technical training partnership in the Charlotte region. Get paid while obtaining an AAS degree in Mechatronics Engineering Technology: <http://apprenticeship2000.com/>

- **NC Works** is a new online platform launched by the state of North Carolina to connect people to employers and job listings across the state ([www.ncworks.gov](http://www.ncworks.gov)).

- **Pre-Health Dreamers**, a resource for other undocumented immigrants who want to pursue health careers ([www.phdreamers.org/](http://www.phdreamers.org/)).

- **Adelante** is an organization that “focuses on education issues affecting Latino and migrant students and their families in North Carolina” ([www.adelantenc.org/](http://www.adelantenc.org/)), including information about paying for college and scholarships.

- **NC Society of Hispanic Professionals.** <http://thencshp.org/resources/for-students/>. Includes a list of North Carolina events and scholarships for Hispanic students.

- **Circle de Luz** “empowers young Latinas by supporting their transformation through extensive mentoring, holistic programming, and scholarship funds for further education” (<http://circledeluz.org/>).

- **Latin American Women’s Association (LAWA).** “LAWA offers a continuum of tutoring, mentoring, and socio-cultural development programs, and higher education financial support for elementary, middle, and high school students in the Charlotte Region”(www.lawanc.org/). Includes a ‘Padres y Padrinos’ program for parents and kid, and a college readiness and access to information program for students and parents, and workshops about health and well-being, jobs, and personal enrichment.

- **Latin American Chamber of Commerce.** “Fostering the economic growth and development of the Latin American business community in the Charlotte region” (<http://lacccharlotte.com/>).

- Official government details about **Obama’s executive actions on immigration** on November 20, 2014: [www.uscis.gov/immigrationaction](http://www.uscis.gov/immigrationaction).

## APPENDIX I: WORD CLOUD

**Word Cloud of most frequently used words in the interview transcripts (created by author using NVivo)**



## APPENDIX J: PAR INFORMATION HANDOUT

### What is Participatory Action Research (PAR)?

- Active community participation in the research process. Challenging mainstream (top-down) ways of research and knowledge production.
- Beyond describing and analyzing society, we engage with it and address issues.
- We are all teachers and learners.
- Whole is greater than the sum of its parts.  $1+6=10$
- Balancing assets and needs, strengths and challenges, agency and structure.
- “Nothing about us, without us” – Youth are change agents, (upcoming) community leaders, and ‘the future,’ and their voices should therefore be included in policy and planning discussions.

### What will we do?

Meet 10 times for 2 hours, January-March/April, 2015.

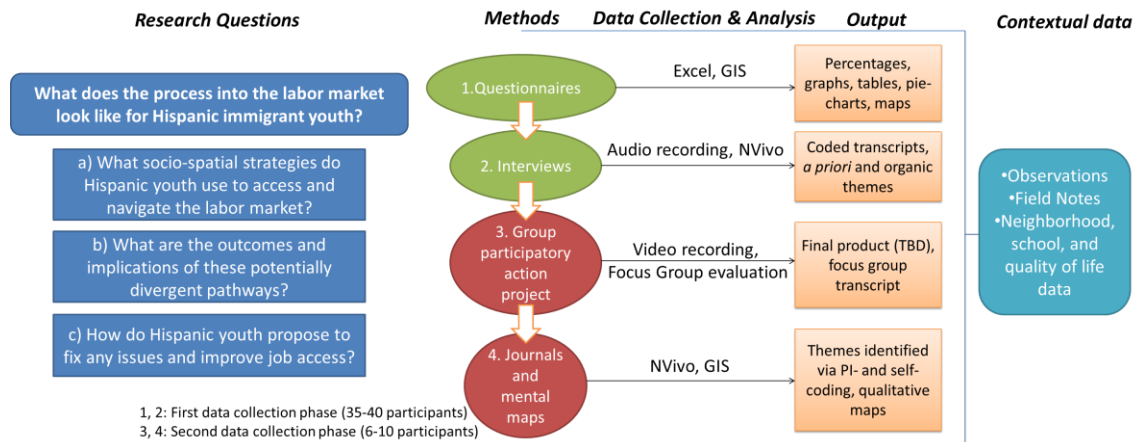
A. Develop a project that addresses the question: How do you propose to improve the process into the labor market for yourself and your peers?

- 1) A series of job workshops, e.g. about interviewing, writing a resume, professional etiquette. Identify topics youth (and their parents) would benefit knowing about, learn about these topics together, and then put together a series of workshops. This could be an initiative schools or the LAC may be able to continue offering.
- 2) A handbook for Hispanic immigrant youth to help them navigate the labor market and find employment. The handbook can be disseminated to schools, local organizations, or on the internet on a webpage set up by the group, for instance.
- 3) A presentation for community members, schools, organizations, and local decision makers about how they can help improve access to employment for Hispanic immigrant youth.
- 4) A photo or video campaign to tackle prejudice and stereotyping in the job market or push for immigration reform.

### B. Journaling and mental mapping exercise

You will be given a notebook and asked to keep a journal in which you write two times a week for 3-4 weeks about any thoughts or experiences related to work and job search.

You will draw a mental map of the places they visited that day - e.g. home, school, a friend's home, the grocery store, and a part-time job – and how they got there. Further instructions will be provided.



### What resources will be available?

- Space at the Latin American Coalition
- Refreshments will be provided at each meeting
- Facilitator (Claire) and your other team members
- Flip chart, markers, pens, journals
- Video camera
- Approx. \$1,800 to create and disseminate the project

### Requirements of participation:

- Attend and participate in meetings. Participation includes: being on time, be ready to engage and work in a team, respect others.
- Complete the journal exercises.

### Benefits of participation:

- Learn about and be involved with research
- Get to know/work together with other youth
- Develop communication, presentation, collaboration skills
- Certificate of completion (may help with college/grad school and job applications)
- Four \$25 gift cards (\$100) at the end

### Dissemination of results:

- National and local conferences
- Community presentations (e.g. at schools, organizations)
- Journals, newspapers, online
- .....

## APPENDIX K: JOURNALING AND MENTAL MAPPING RESEARCH EXERCISE HANDOUT

As part of this research, you are asked to write and draw a map in this journal at least one time a week for a period of one month about any thoughts or experiences related to work and job search.

### Mental Mapping guidelines

- Your 'map' represents the places you visited that day and may include home, school, the LAC, and the place you work.
- The map does not have to be to scale but distances on your page can represent real or perceived distances. For instance, you might draw your home far from your work because it is physically far away but it simply might feel far away because you have to take two buses and a lot of time to get there. Explaining this information is important and you can do this on the map itself or below it (e.g. 'it makes me 15 minutes to get to work by car. My sister usually drops me off.' Or 'I have to walk to get to school and that takes 20 minutes. It is difficult to get here because there are not many sidewalks and the roads are busy').
- In your mental map you can also chose to draw a sketch of (a part of) Charlotte and indicate which areas or neighborhoods you would or would not like to work. Please explain why you have a preference or a dislike towards this space. Have you had a good/bad experience there? If certain places make you feel uncomfortable, why do you think that is? Or maybe you only want to work in the areas that you can easily walk or bus to?

For more info and examples, see: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mental\\_mapping](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mental_mapping);  
<http://thesis2011.micadesign.org/mccampbell/mentalmapping.html>

### Journaling

- The journal entries are 1-3 paragraphs and should, in some way, be related to your experiences working or seeking work, your perceptions on your job opportunities, and/or ways in which you are trying to improve your job prospects. These questions can help guide you:

- What was your experience like getting to work today? Was it easy or hard to get there? Do you like the work and work environment? Why or why not? Is this something you would like to continue to do in the future?
- When you were at school today, did you learn something that you might want to develop into a career? What would it take to make that a reality? (i.e. what would you have to do or what would have to happen to allow you to get there?).
- If you looked for a job today, where did you look or who did you talk to? What kind of information or resources did you use or lack?
- If you are currently applying for a job, what does this process involve (e.g. an in-person interview or a resume) and how is this going?
- Reflect on your general view of and feelings about your (current or future) job.

- Your journal entry may also be about your mental map, but it does not have to be.

Timeline

- February 25, 2015: introduce the journaling and mental mapping
- Please write at least one journal entries and mental maps per week between February 25 and March 25.
- I will bring folders for you to keep your entries in.
- Please bring all your entries with you on March 25! This is when you will also analyze ('code') your entries according to themes you identify. I will provide further explanations about how to do this analysis. At the end of this session, you will return your journals to me and they will be kept locked in my UNC Charlotte office with other research data. Please let me know if you have any questions! ☺

## APPENDIX L: AGENDA FIRST PAR MEETING - JAN 14, 2015

3 goals for today:

- 1) Get to know your team
- 2) Learning about Participatory Action Research (PAR)
- 3) What to expect in the next 10 weeks?

Project goal: With your team, develop a project that addresses the following question:  
How do you propose to improve the process into the labor market for yourself and your peers?

Keep in mind the conversation we had during your interview, including challenges you currently face and the strengths (assets) you bring.

Potential ideas:

- develop a mentorship program for immigrant/Latino kids/youth
- start a student organization for immigrant/Latino kids/youth
- make a video or photo documentary against prejudice
- put together a campaign for in-state tuition
- develop a website/workshop series with info for youth about jobs and job-related skills
- examples: <http://www.fed-up-honeys.org/>; "stereotype stickers"; annotated maps and a photo-essay expressing youth impressions of health clinics.

Tentative meeting dates:

1. January 14
  2. January 21
  3. January 28
  4. February 4
  5. February 11
  6. February 18
  7. February 25
  8. March 11 (no meeting March 4)
  9. March 18
  10. March 25
  11. April 1 (in case we need to cancel one of the meetings, this will be our 10th meeting)
- You will receive reminders via text and our Facebook page. If your number changes or you are unable to attend one of the meetings, please let me know a.s.a.p.

Next meeting: Wed Jan 21, 5.30-7.30pm at the LAC. We will discuss and decide on the project.



## APPENDIX M: AGENDA SECOND PAR MEETING - JAN 21, 2015

1) Getting to know each other (continued)

2) Brainstorming project ideas

In small groups, discuss potential project ideas. Guiding questions:

- Topic - What is the main career-related challenge faced by Hispanic immigrant youth that we want to address? Or maybe it's a strength you share that we want to highlight or raise awareness about.
- Audience - Who are we trying to convince/educate/reach out to?
- Method – In what way(s) do we want to get the information across? E.g. written text (report, handbook, essays, poetry), oral presentations, video, photography. Will the information be delivered in person, on a website, via social media?
- Can we get this done in the timeframe and with the budget we have?

Each group presents their top idea to the rest of the team.

*Break*

3) Project Planning

- Deciding/voting on project.
- Putting together project goals and a 'Plan of Action.'

4) Budget (if there's time)

- List of supplies

5) Debriefing and closing

Next meeting: Wed. Jan 28, 5.30pm. We will finalize the budget and divide roles/tasks.

## APPENDIX N: AGENDA THIRD PAR MEETING - JANUARY 28, 2015

## 1) Personality activity + summarizing last week's meeting

Goal: to improve job knowledge and job-seeking skills of immigrant youth, e.g. where to look for jobs, how to write a resume and a cover letter, how to communicate and dress professionally, how to succeed in an interview, etc.

Audience: Immigrant youth between the ages of 15 and 21 (approximately).

Methods:

- Develop a website with career-related tips and information for immigrant youth in the form of text, videos, links, templates.
- Organize two seminars (e.g. at the Latin American Coalition):
  - One at the beginning of the project to get other youth in Charlotte excited about the website and ask them what they want to see on it. The seminar will feature a speaker/speakers who will talk, for instance, about what employers are looking for and how to successfully market yourself.
  - One at the end to learn from a different speaker and to showcase the website.
- Create a Facebook page, a Twitter account, and an Instagram account (and/or use existing ones?) to promote the seminars and the website. Social media can also be used to make the process interactive and get feedback or questions from our 'fans'.
- Promote the seminars and website at local high schools, libraries, community organizations, universities, etc.

## 2) Detailed Plan of Action

- a. Content of the website
  - i. What information do we want to include to tailor our website to immigrant youth? In other words, how will the information be different than other websites and (generic) materials out there?
  - ii. Will the website being fully in English and Spanish or will we have most in English and some in Spanish?
- b. Content of the seminars
  - i. Who do we want to invite to speak at the seminars?
  - ii. What will we discuss/what will attendees learn?
- c. Promoting the website
- d. Promoting the seminars
- e. Project/group name (+ logo)
- f. How will we measure success? e.g. count how many people attended the seminars, keep track of how many times the website is viewed, ask users to provide feedback?
- g. Timeline

- i. When will each task or event take place? How long will we keep the website and social media platforms updated/active?
  - h. Anything else we need to consider?
- 3) Budget
  - a. Think about what is needed for the different components of the project.
  - b. Anything from staples.com or cdw-g.com. That includes office supplies, hardware, software, copying and printing handouts, flyers, brochures, folders, business cards, promotional materials (e.g. flash drives, pens, magnets, bags), stamps, stickers, posters, banners, T-shirts).
  - c. Food costs cannot be included (but we could all bring something to the seminars if you want).
- 4) Dividing tasks (if there is time)
  - a. What role does each participant have in this project?
  - b. Taking advantage of different skills, backgrounds, leadership styles, personalities
- 5) Wrapping up

## APPENDIX O: AGENDA FORTH PAR MEETING - FEB. 4, 2015

## 1) Checking in

- Welcome [As people are coming in, hand out results of Valuing diversity in personalities and strengths]
- go over people's results. Debrief: Go around the circle: what was your outcome? How do you feel this accurately describes you (or not)? How can knowing our different leadership styles help us as a team?

## 2) Project Plan of Action

- Anyone want to summarize what we did last time?
- review summary of what we discussed last week - Anything we need to add or edit?
- review timeline
- review budget
- vote on name
- vote on logo
- website info
- guest speaker for Feb 11 or Feb 18, 6.30-7.30/8pm (we will meet 5.30-6.30pm)?
- Website content and copyright. - anyone started surveys yet? potentially helpful resources: <http://career.uncc.edu/>, Claire reports on what she has found so far.

## 3) Next steps and assigning roles

- What do we need to do for the next 1-2 meetings? Who will do what?

## 4) Wrapping up

- brief evaluation of how things are going - what is going well? what can we improve on? (hand out little cards and each writes their own, names optional.)

Next meeting: Wed. Feb 11, 2015. We will work on the project! (and introduce journal activity)

## APPENDIX P: AGENDA FIFTH PAR MEETING - FEB 11, 2015

## 1) Welcome (5.30-5.40pm)

- Where are you at on 'the line'? (use flipchart)

## 2) Resuming website and seminar planning (5.40-6.25pm)

Revisit our discussion from last week. Share reflections I had. Need to talk about:

- my role – too much, too little? What do you need from me?
- research and outreach as two separate processes
- each person reports on their tasks and what they came up with:

## a) logo

b) name (everyone) youth ADAPT: Always Developing, Acting, Promoting, Training  
Youth ADAPT NC?

c) website updates. which site to go with?

d) everyone reports back about the survey they did with 2 people

e) everyone reports back about one or two things they found on other websites that they liked and think we should include in ours, or things that were missing elsewhere that we need to include. [name] will specifically look at MYEP guidebook to see what we want to include from there.

f) revisit target group (immigrant youth? Latino youth? Wording, language)

g) moving forward - tasks for next week

5-10 min. break while Pat sets up and we transition into the seminar

## 3) Seminar 1, 6.30-7.30pm: Pat Martinez

- take picture with her at the end

## 4) Wrapping up

Next meeting: next week, Feb 18. We will work on the website content and introduce the journaling activity.

## APPENDIX Q: AGENDA SIXTH PAR MEETING - FEB 25, 2015

Conference call (due to weather forecast)

1) Welcome (5.30-5.45)

- go over agenda
- who is on the call? Share something you achieved in the past two weeks (not related to this project).
- update: [name] can no longer be part of the project unfortunately, due to other responsibilities that demand her attention.

2) Recap last meeting (5.45-6)

- recap seminar with pat martinez- see notes
- echo what Pat was saying about you being community leaders. demonstrating leadership and commitment by being part of this project. this is something you can put on your resume and write about in job or scholarship applications. personal development. leadership and knowing who you are. the other stuff, you can google.

3) Website (6-6.20)

- name: ADAPT: Always Developing by Acting, Preparing, and Transforming' got the most votes
- website hosting site: Squarespace
- Logo
- domain name: youthadaptnc.com or something else?
- personal paragraphs for the website
- updates on budget and MYEP
- revise timeline (work off 1/28/15 draft)
- who will be available next week to meet?
- website content - see notes from 2/11/15 -> moving forward with the website: dividing tasks! Meet with your 'team' to work on this....when?
- where are we missing info? How will we obtain this info (e.g. internet, interview employers, Claire holds a workshop)? – write on piece of paper what you would like me to do a mini-workshop on, if anything. E.g. resumes (or look over people's resumes), interviewing skills, professional attire advice (shopping session).

2) Seminar (6.20-6.40)

- will seminar 2 be at the LAC or elsewhere?
- design flyer
- distributing flyers
- social media

3) Introduce journal activity (6.45-7.15)

- why are we doing this? Purpose: looking at daily experiences of work and career in the lives of young people. Perceptions of space, distance, traveling to-from work and school. Reasoning behind making certain decisions can help us shape policies and programs that

better support youth.

- go over guidelines + write first entry (for those who aren't there, have friend give them their folder + I will call them to explain details)
- 'sell' the activity, make it interesting and fun. Plus, mention the skills they will build: self-expression/reflection/awareness + how to analyze text and images (qualitative data) and identify themes.

#### 4) Wrapping up (7.15-7.30)

- tasks for next week: 1 journal entry + work on your section of the website
  - flyer for seminar
  - website draft
  - Make sure to end on a positive note! : Name one thing you have learned so far during the project (can be about something specific or about yourself).
- Next meeting: March 4? Or March 11? Working session, creating content for website.

## APPENDIX R: AGENDA SEVENTH PAR MEETING - MARCH 4, 2015

## 1) Welcome and checking in (5.30-5.50)

- Where are you at on 'the line'? (use flipchart)
- hand out folders
- how are we doing on journals? any questions?

## 2) Resuming website and seminar planning (5.50-7.15)

- reiterate/be clear about how this is research, what are the research components. get feedback on disclosure statement draft.
- revisit timeline (see updated version in folders): when do we want to start flyering/create facebook page/promote website and seminar? when do we want to try to launch website, March 25? Seminar 2 on April 1 or 8? Evaluation meeting on April 8 or 15? updates on location.
- budget updates
- speakers seminar 2
- time to work on tasks in small groups

[take break midway through]

## 3) Wrapping up (7.15-7.30)

- next meeting will be next week: March 11. We will have a similar working session. And will also be focusing on promotion and social media

- how are we doing on group guidelines? Any improvements I/we need to make? Is there information or guidance you would like to receive from me that would have made it easier for you to complete this project?

- What do you like most so far about our project/meetings? (can circle back to group guidelines we created)

Next meeting: March 11. We will work on website content and promotion.



## APPENDIX S: AGENDA EIGHTH PAR MEETING - MARCH 18, 2015

## 1) Welcome (5.30-5.45)

- Where are you at on 'the line'? (use flipchart)
- feedback on event 3/11

## 2) Talking about the project (5.45-6.10)

- giving people the language to talk about this project. How do you describe this to people? How would you like me to talk about the project/you to others?- developing the language and a consensus on how to talk about this work.

- First: turn to your partner and explain to them what this project is that you are part of, as if they were an employer or a teacher who was unfamiliar with the project.
- Second: pairs share with the group
- Third: Is there a consensus about how we talk about this initiative?\*

## 3) Resuming website and seminar planning (6.10-7.15)

- what have people done in the past 2 weeks? Updates on food donations, guest speakers, supplies, website, t-shirts and stickers, ...

Promoting the group/seminar:

- who will do what? FB fan page and FB event, twitter, Instagram
- time to work on tasks in small groups – everyone works on their section. Pedro works on flyer.

## 4) Mayra Arteaga from Hola Noticias visits 6.30-7.30pm to interview youth and take a picture

## 5) Wrapping up (7.15-7.30)

- how are we doing on journals? any questions? On March 25 we will we do a coding session and you will learn about how to analyze qualitative data (explain what that means).
- Ending on positive note! Name one thing you have learned so far (about yourself or something job-related)

Next meeting: next week, March 25<sup>th</sup>. We will continue to work a bit on the website and also do the coding for the journals so make sure you bring your mental maps and journal entries!! I will bring pizza (and flyers for seminar 2).

## APPENDIX T: AGENDA NINTH PAR MEETING - MARCH 25, 2015

## 1) Welcome (5.30-5.45)

- Where are you at on 'the line'?
  - Communication and receiving feedback and your tasks
- Learning lessons for me and for you

## 2) Resuming website and seminar planning (5.45-6.25)

- seminar: updates on food donations, flyers, FB, guest speakers, t-shirts, stickers. who will be the moderator? how is promotion going? What else needs to be done and who will do it? review seminar agenda
- website: work on website. What else do you need to finish your section? whose sections do I have so far? whose bios do I have so far?

## 3) Journal coding (6.25-7.25)

- see guidelines on handout
- everyone hands in everything afterwards (let me know if you want copies and I will make them for you)

## 4) Wrapping up (7.25-7.30)

- reflecting on process

Next meeting: No meeting on April 1? Work with your partner to finish your section. Section are due to me by April 2, 2015. Seminar will be the official launch. Make sure you promote the event! Check the fb and groupme group for updates.

Next time we see each other is April 8 for the seminar. Be there by 5.30pm. I will be there around 5. April 15<sup>th</sup> is evaluation meeting, last meeting.

End on positive note: celebrating accomplishments. Go over 'how to talk about this project' handout.

In qualitative research, coding refers to the process of identifying themes (‘codes’) from language-based or visual data. These data can be interview transcripts, participant observations, field notes, journals, mental maps, photographs, (mental) maps and video, for instance. You are not only summarizing the main ideas of the data but also interpreting and analyzing it. Codes can be used to develop models and theories about a certain topic, e.g. immigration, youth experiences, job access. These models and theories help us better understand the world and create effective programs and policies.

## Guidelines

### 1. Open coding/initial coding

- Be open-minded about what you are trying to find.
- When you read this sentence/paragraph, what is your 'first impression'? How would you describe this in one or a few words?
- Label certain sentences or part of sentences that are about a common theme. Are they all saying the same thing or a slightly different version?
- As you are readings, ask: who, when, where, what, how, how much, why? E.g. in cases of hiring discrimination based on ethnicity, who is discriminating? How is it noticed? Who are affected? Why is it happening? Why is it important? What are the impacts?
- Be sensitive to phrases like 'never' and 'always'. Is this really the case? What else is going on?

[illegible]



Lastly, move onto third stage:

3. Selective coding.

- What is in the core? If you were to narrow down your journals and maps to a few main words or phrases, what would they be? Look for essential concepts that have the power to tell the larger story.

Selective codes	Explanation

## APPENDIX V: AGENDA TENTH PAR MEETING - APRIL 1, 2015

## 1) Welcome (5.30-5.45)

- Where are you at on 'the line'?
- revisit last session and applaud on excellent bios and coding work

## 2) seminar

- updates: updates on food donations, flyers, FB event invites, guest speakers, t-shirts, stickers. how is promotion going? What else needs to be done and who will do it?
- sign cards for guest speakers. I will put together gift baskets.
- run through questions and agenda
- moderators
- what people should bring/wear. Be there by 5.30pm (earlier if possible to help set up).
- prizes

## 3) Website

- what does it look like at the moment?
- what else needs to be done?
- still need bios. Photos if you want one next to your bio.
- Final website sections from everyone. Have seen drafts from [names] Still need drafts from: [names]
- Get final versions to me by Sunday night.
- What do we want to have in our FAQ section?
- work on whatever needs to be done now.

## 4) Wrapping up (7.25-7.30)

- any questions or concerns? how are you feeling in one word?
- reflecting on what we accomplished today, get everyone excited for next week.

Final evaluation meeting: April 15 at the LAC

## APPENDIX W: AGENDA YOUTH PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SEMINAR - APRIL 7, 2015

### - Agenda:

- 4.30pm: pick up donations
- 5-5.30pm: set up the room
- 5.30pm: Youth organizers and panelists arrive.
- 5.45-6pm: Youth attendees arrive. There will be snacks and beverages. Sign-in.
- 6-6.15pm: Introductions of team and project. Recognize support from funders and LAC. Other housekeeping. Agenda for the evening.
- 6.15-6.25pm: Guest speakers introduce themselves + a bit about the work they do.
- 6.25-6.50pm: Questions for the panel (see questions below).
- 6.50-7.15pm: Questions from the audience for the panel
- 7.15-7.20pm: Thank the panel. Hand gifts. Thank attendees for being there. Website launch + refer to website for further info and they can contact Youth ADAPT NC via Facebook or email.
- 7.20-7.30pm: Networking (event officially ends at 7.30pm but if people wanted to stick around to talk that is fine, as long as we are out by 8pm).

### - Panelists:

Jennifer Geyer, MeckEd Career Pathways Advisor at Garinger High School

Jorge De La Jara, General Manager at Norsan Media.

Barbara Scannell, Charlotte Works Education Outreach Coordinator

Questions for panel (devised by participants):

1. What was your first job and what did you learn from it?
2. What do you wish you had known when you were in high school or college about preparing yourself for the labor market?
3. When you are hiring someone, what kinds of skills are you looking for that set a candidate apart from the rest? What are other employers looking for?
4. People talk about 'networking' but what does that mean? How do you do it?
5. What is a proper way to follow up once I have submitted my job application or had an interview?
6. How do I 'sell myself' to an employer if I don't have (relevant) work experience?
7. What do you see as the most common mistake made by job applicants?
8. How important is my GPA when I am applying for a job?
9. Looking at today's job market - and what we can expect in the future - what are some promising careers or fields?

## APPENDIX X: AGENDA FINAL PAR MEETING – APRIL 15, 2015

- 1) Welcome (5.30-5.45)
    - a. Sign in, food
    - b. Go over agenda (informal, evaluation + celebration)
    - c. Recap all the things we did and why we are here today: evaluate the process, celebrate your accomplishment, and think about your involvement moving forward.
    - d. Feedback on seminar 2
    - e. Remaining stickers and t-shirts
    - f. Don't forget to get journal entries from [names]
  - 2) Evaluation process (5.45-6.20)
    - a. Each fill out short survey
    - b. Discussion about likes and dislikes, what went well, what was challenging, what we learned, what we could've done differently, favorite parts.
- 6.20-6.30pm: break
- 3) Celebration (6.30-7.15)
    - a. Go around the room. Awards. Claire + team reflect on each participants' contributions.
  - 4) What's next? (7.15-7.30)
    - a. Opportunity to stay involved (in this project or in other ways in the community)
    - b. Youth business connector
    - c. It is okay for me to contact you about this? How can I best reach you?
    - d. Interest in attending leadership event on Sat May 2, 9am-4pm?
    - e. Group pictures
    - f. Sign to receive your gift cards



## APPENDIX Y: HANDOUT FOR PAR PARTICIPANTS

**How to talk about this project and your involvement** (e.g. in interviews with potential employers; with friends, family and community members; in scholarship, job, and university applications)

### Overview of the research

This dissertation project analyzes the process into the labor market for Hispanic/Latino<sup>49</sup> immigrant youth. The target group is youth aged 16-21 who arrived in the United States by the age of 12 but they were not born in the US (the “1.5 generation”) because this group has the unique position of being largely ‘American’ but may or may not have citizenship or legal status in the US.

The study contributes to our understanding of immigrant integration and upward mobility in the US context in general, but also more narrowly within the “New South.” Charlotte, North Carolina, lends itself well as a case study site because of its status as an emerging immigrant gateway city, with Latino growth rates over 800% between 1980 and 2000. Employing a multi-tiered qualitative methodology (questionnaires; interviews; observations; and participatory action modes of research, such as mental mapping and journaling), this project takes close examination of the lived experience of Latino youth. By involving youth as co-researchers, they help decide on and design strategies to improve job access for themselves and their peers, and gain relevant skills in the process. Results will inform ongoing debates about immigration policy, and suggest programs and other initiatives that can improve immigrant youth positionality in the labor force. As such, the outcomes of this study can be useful for policy makers, local government, businesses, and community organizations, as well as other researchers.

This study is funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF), the International Society of Women Geographers (SWG), and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte’s Chancellor’s Diversity Grant.

### What we/I did

- We are Youth ADAPT NC (Always Developing by Acting, Preparing, and Transforming), a group of fourteen highly motivated 16 to 21-year-old Latino youth.
- We are participating in a research project about Latino youth job access, led by Claire Schuch from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.
- We are developing a website for immigrant youth with information about job-related skills.
- We planned two seminars: the first one (Feb 11, 2015) was for us to learn more about leadership development and job preparedness. The second (April 8, 2015) is open to the public so youth can learn from an experienced panel about how to set themselves up for success.

---

<sup>49</sup>In this study, the terms ‘Hispanic’ and ‘Latino’ are used interchangeably, because: a) this is oftentimes the case in research and government reports and publications; b) there is not a consensus among immigrants from Latin America about which should be used.

- We are helping the community.
- We are inspiring other youth and letting them know they have opportunities.
- We know what other youth are going through so we are using our experiences to make it easier for them.
- Parallel to helping others, we are learning things ourselves and developing our leadership, communication, and collaboration skills in the process.
- We are part of a team but I am also taking the lead on my own section and tasks to make the seminar and website happen. I am bringing my ideas and skills to the table and working together with others to build a project.
- We are co-creators of the process. Unlike traditional projects, I was part of building a project that did not exist yet.
- We learned more about qualitative and participatory research. I analyzed my own journal entries and mental maps using coding guidelines.
- Talk about any difficulties or challenges you or the team faced and how you dealt with them.
- Talk about what skills you brought into the project and what you learned through the process (this may be different for each person). Examples: developing values, time management, communication, taking initiative, learning to express my opinion and ideas in a group setting, collaborating with other.

#### The bigger issues at stake

- Currently, 1 in 5 children in the United States were born outside the US or are children of immigrants. About 13% of Charlotte's population is Hispanic. Demographics in the US and in Charlotte are shifting. With growing numbers of Latinos and immigrants, their social and economic well-being is of increasing interest to cities and the nation as a whole.
- The prospects for a growing number of Hispanic children and youth will be considerably shaped by their employment opportunities. Improving opportunities for immigrant youth benefits not only them will allow them to contribute fully to US society and their communities.
- The stakes are highest for undocumented or DACAmented youth, because "[w]ithout broader means to obtain a postsecondary education and legally participate in adult life, these young men and women are a vulnerable population at risk for poverty and hardship. However, if given opportunities to pursue higher education and work legally in this country, these bilingual, bicultural students would benefit U.S. taxpayers and the economy overall" (Abrego & Gonzales, 2010, p. 144).

#### Example of what to write on your resume/CV (doesn't have to be the whole thing or

these exact words – choose what works for you)

Participant/Co-researcher on a National Science Foundation (NSF)-funded study  
January 2015-April 2015

- Participated in a UNC Charlotte-led Participatory Action Research (PAR) project about Latino immigrant youth job access.
- Collaborated with 14 other youth to design a project based on current challenges Latino youth face in obtaining jobs.
- Co-developed a website with information for other youth about how to find jobs, how to write a resume, and how to prepare for interviews.
- Helped organize and promote a panel discussion so youth in the community can learn from professional about how to prepare themselves for the work force.
- Created and analyzed journal entries and mental maps to better understand how youth navigate job access and career opportunities.

Of course, feel free to add your own flavor and interpretation to any of these ideas! Remember that not everybody is familiar with this project and process so practice explaining it to a friend, family member, or yourself in the mirror to make sure you get your point across and you become familiar with the wording.

Feel free to list me as a reference: Claire Schuch, Ph.D. Candidate, University of North Carolina at Charlotte. [Jschuch1@uncc.edu](mailto:Jschuch1@uncc.edu). If you are applying for a specific position, please send me the job description and a link of the company so I can be prepared to speak on your strengths as they relate to the position you are applying for.

## APPENDIX Z: DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

As a co-researcher of the Participatory Action Research (PAR) project, I understand that:

- The video/audio recordings of the meetings are part of the research and will be kept confidential and secured in the researcher's (Claire's) UNC Charlotte office.
- My journal entries and mental maps are part of the research. I will hand them in to the researcher and they will be kept confidential and secured in the researcher's UNC Charlotte office. I can request copies for myself. Quotes or maps may be used in publications or presentations but will be de-identified (i.e. your name and any other identifying information, like your address, will not be included).
- I am not obliged to disclose my identity (e.g. name, picture) in any of the products or promotional materials related to this project. This includes the website and any public presentations or newspaper articles. This is all part of the outreach process (not the research) and is therefore optional.
- My research involvements end on April 15 after the evaluation meeting. I am invited to be involved with the website and presentations about this project after the meetings end. However, this is optional.
- Though the researcher will be available to support where needed, the website is owned by all PAR participants so it is up to you as a group how you decide to move it forward (or not) after we launch it.
- For any further questions about my role and rights as a research participant, I can contact the researcher.

Signature of Participant

Date

---

Signature of Investigator

---

Date

## APPENDIX AA: EVALUATING THE PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH (PAR) PROCESS WITH CO-RESEARCHERS

At our final meeting (April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015), we will have a focus group discussion to evaluate the process and end results. Participants will also be asked to fill out a short survey.

Survey (on paper, handed out to each individual; anonymous)

Please circle the number below that best represents how you feel about each statement:

Through my participation in this project, I...	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Learned more about research	1	2	3	4	5
Learned more about myself	1	2	3	4	5
Developed skills that will help me in the future	1	2	3	4	5
Improved my ability to work with others	1	2	3	4	5
Improved my ability to communicate my ideas and opinions	1	2	3	4	5
Gained confidence in myself	1	2	3	4	5
Made new friends/connections	1	2	3	4	5
Feel more prepared for future jobs	1	2	3	4	5
Helped other youth improve their job-related skills	1	2	3	4	5

Overall, I...	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Enjoyed being part of this project	1	2	3	4	5
Think we worked well as a team	1	2	3	4	5
Feel like my voice was heard and valued	1	2	3	4	5
Think the facilitator communicated well with us	1	2	3	4	5
Think the facilitator was helpful	1	2	3	4	5

Group discussion (all together, will be recorded like the rest of the meetings)

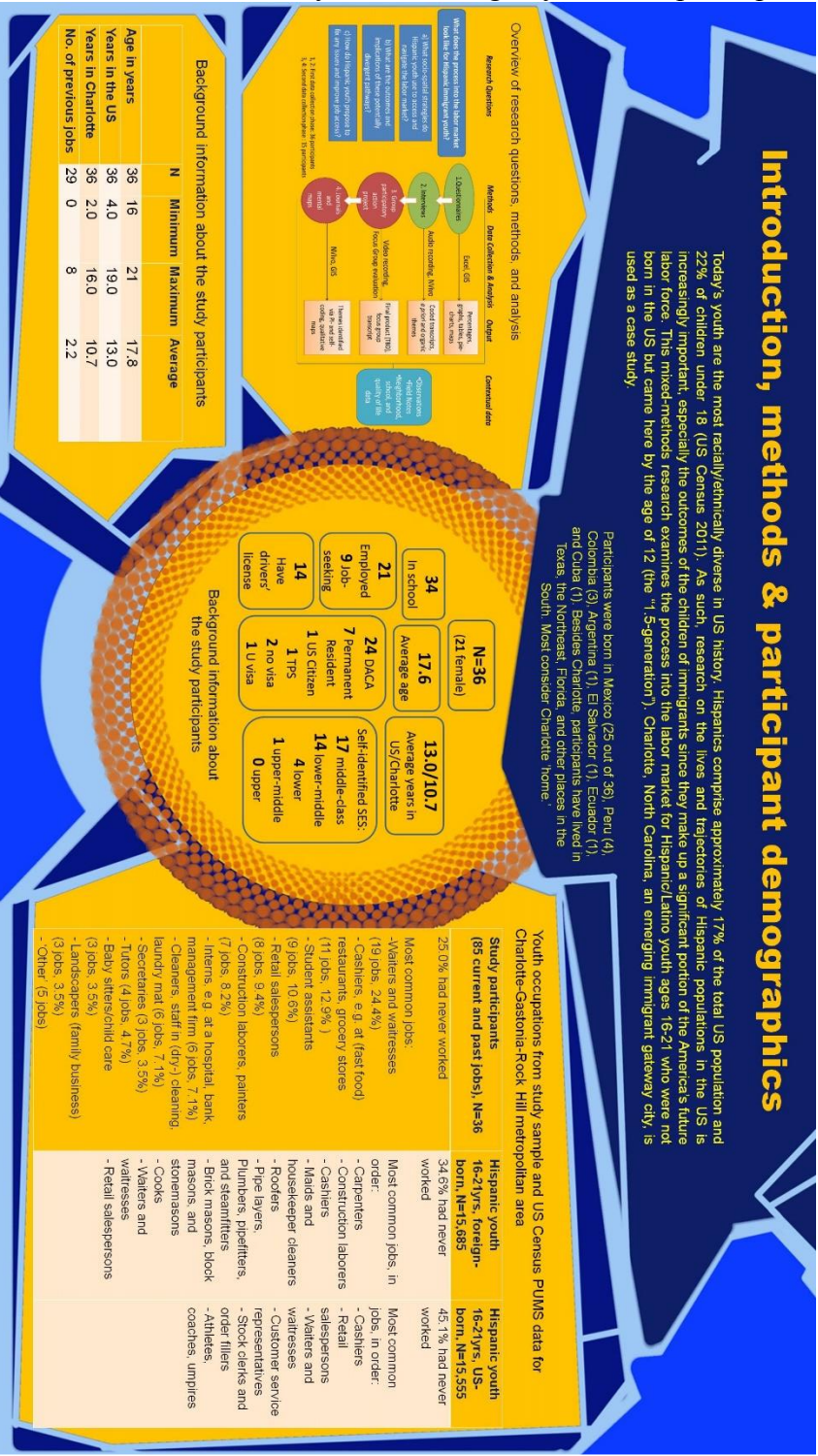
Guiding questions:

- How has your involvement in this project...
  - a. taught you about research?
  - b. taught you more about yourself?
  - c. helped you prepare for jobs?/helped other youth prepare for jobs?
  - d. improved your ability to communicate your ideas and opinions?
  - e. improved your ability to work with others?
  - f. made you feel more confident?

- What do you think about the time frame? E.g.: Would you have liked to have met more often or for longer meetings? Was it too time consuming?
- What challenges did we face? How did we resolve them?
- What did we do well as a group?
- If we were to do this again, what would your advice be to me and the next group of participants? Is there any information or guidance you would have liked to have received from me that would have made it easier for you to complete this project?
- What is the single most important thing you learned as a co-researcher in this study?
- What was your favorite part or moment of the project?

APPENDIX BB: COMMUNITY PRESENTATION POSTERS

Content by author. Design by research participant/assistant



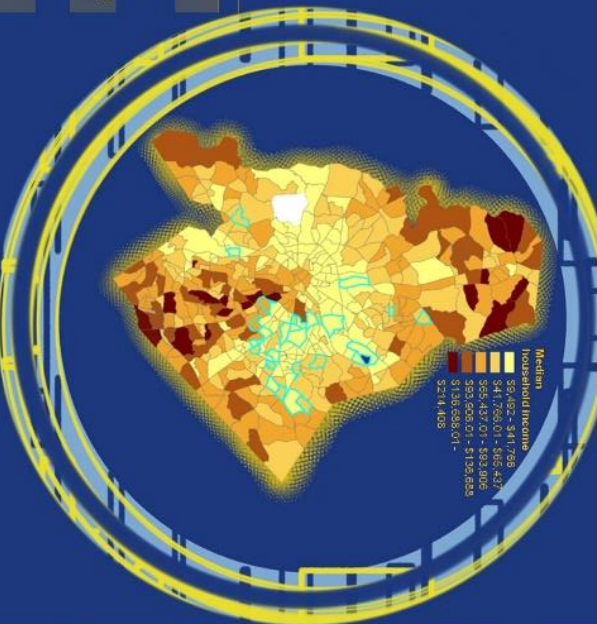


## Social and spatial factors contributing to inclusion & exclusion of Latino/a youth from the labor market

Table 1 shows factors that assist youth in their labor market access, whereas Table 2 demonstrates the main variables restricting full integration. Table 3 presents factors that proved to have more of an indirect impact or where more contextual rather than central to describing youth experiences.

Participants live in various parts of Charlotte-Mecklenburg (map 1). Together, they represent 11 zip codes, 23 census tracts, and 26 Neighborhood Statistical Areas (NSAs). Participants are likely to live in areas where Latinos are concentrated (though some live in areas with few Hispanics) and where median household incomes are lower than the county average.

Map 1: Median household income by neighborhood statistical area (NSA), with participants' NSAs highlighted



Variable	Participant quote*
Having a social security number	"Being a resident is really, really helpful, and it kind of gives me more security and confidence in the things that I do" (M, 16, PR)
Bilingualism	"they were very desperate about finding bilinguals ( ) I have access to more than one community through knowing both languages. A lot of people see that and they want to use that" (F, 21, PR)
Biculturalism	"Being tolerant of someone else's culture is a great thing that we as a Latino population have grown to understand" (M, 16, undocumented)
Personality and character traits	"I get adapted to anything and every environment" (F, 17, PR)
Family motivations	"I know my parents have worked hard to get me where I am now and I have to keep going, keep working hard, become more successful every day, and to not just strive for me but to strive for my family" (F, 17, DACA)

Variable	Participant quote*
Lack of (permanent) legal status	"The main thing is my immigration status. I think if I had one, I would do something or right now. Having a better job, I would be in school already. That's my main problem. Other than that, I feel pretty confident that I could get the job I wanted. I just don't have an immigration status to do so" (F, 20, undocumented)
Discrimination and stereotypes	"society doesn't look at the Latin American as big professionals" (F, 18, DACA)
Lack of resources, support, and information	"Coming from a Hispanic family, we have connections with our family ( ), but to say, go to work, education wise, opportunity wise, that's a whole different story. There's very few of us that have those resources or connections to someone who can help get us there" (M, 16, undocumented). "I've applied to many schools, but the money is not enough. I don't know . . . even with what I work, I go to get another job. It's not enough to pay for school unfortunately. So I'm very undecided" (F, 21, DACA)

Variable	Participant quote*
Household income/SES	"I shipped school to work and the money I would earn, I would put it in the savings account for my parents" (F, 18, DACA)
Gender	"we can't deny the fact that women are underrepresented in different work places. We can't deny that fact. But, at the same time, because companies are trying to be more inclusive, more progressive, they try to find ways, try to focus on hiring more women in the coming years" (M, 21, DACA)
Age	"younger people are judged and sometimes considered irresponsible" (M, 18, DACA)
Space: neighborhood of residence, transportation, school segregation	"Since I don't have transportation, I've been looking for jobs close to where I live" (M, 19, DACA). "when people look out to a job and they look for a where you live, I also feel like that also means something about you" (M, 16, PR)

\*Verbatim quotes from interview transcripts. Quotes identify participant ID, gender (M/F), age, and documentation status. PR= permanent resident.



## Strategies youth use to navigate the labor market

Tactics employed by youth to navigate the labor market includes finding jobs via friends, family, and the internet; leveraging resources and connections; advertising their bilingualism; working close to home; engaging in activism; pursuing higher education; surrounding one-self by like-minded people; and code-switching.

Where/how participants are most likely to search for jobs (from most likely to least likely):

1. Friend
2. Online
3. Parent
4. Relative
5. Teacher
6. Neighbor

### Strategy

### Participant quote/explanation

Pursuing higher education to gain skills and knowledge, and access to professional fields and networks

Connecting what they are currently learning to future careers

Surrounding oneself with positive, like-minded people

Dealing with discrimination and stereotypes

Youth were able to make clear connections between what they are learning in school and what they would like to do (or not do) in the future. Making such positive connections between school and careers later in life can enhance motivation.

"The other friend that didn't want to go to college, he changed her mind-set after hanging out with us. When you hang out with a certain group of people, you kind of change your mind-set to theirs." (F-16, DACA)

Latinos have many shared traits and racial identifications. Even though high self-esteem and achievement are linked to a positive view of one's racial/ethnic identity, the pressure to act/look like the dominant group remains present. "Because I'm so fair skinned (...), at times I'm white and at times I'm Latina. Depending on which part of me somebody knows first, the second one usually changes the treatment towards me." (F-21, PR)

"I have noticed the more you act 'white,' the closer bonds you have with white people" (M-16, PR). Code-switching can also be considered a strategy to adjust to the environment. E.g.: "You have to see what you're comfortable with; if they seem to have more of a Hispanic culture in them, then you show that side. If they seem that they're more Americanized, then you show that side." (M-21, DACA)

### Strategy

### Participants quote/explanation

Finding jobs via friends, family, and the internet

Seeking, leveraging institutional resources and connections

Working while undocumented: connections are everything

Advertising mentoring bilingualism

Working close to home; carpools, and applying in person

Advertising mentoring bilingualism

Activism

"Through my dad and my uncle, I think I have a secure job, working in construction" (M-18, DACA).

In the last quote, the phrase "I think I have a secure job" suggests that family ties may not assist in accessing participants' dream jobs, but they do provide a sort of safety net in employment. Youth may not be able to connect them to.

Participants described how non-familial adults around them assisted them in the job search and accessing associated resources. Many of these supports are located within schools or community organizations. "I got my job because of my involvement in school or with the people I have been able to meet." (F-21, DACA).

"To get a job, without documentation, your connections are all you have. If you don't really have anyone to connect with and get a job, and then you're not going to be able to stay here." (M-21, DACA). Undocumented youth (even with a higher education degree) are often constrained to working low-wage, unstable jobs. Such jobs are becoming more scarce as a result of the Ventry.

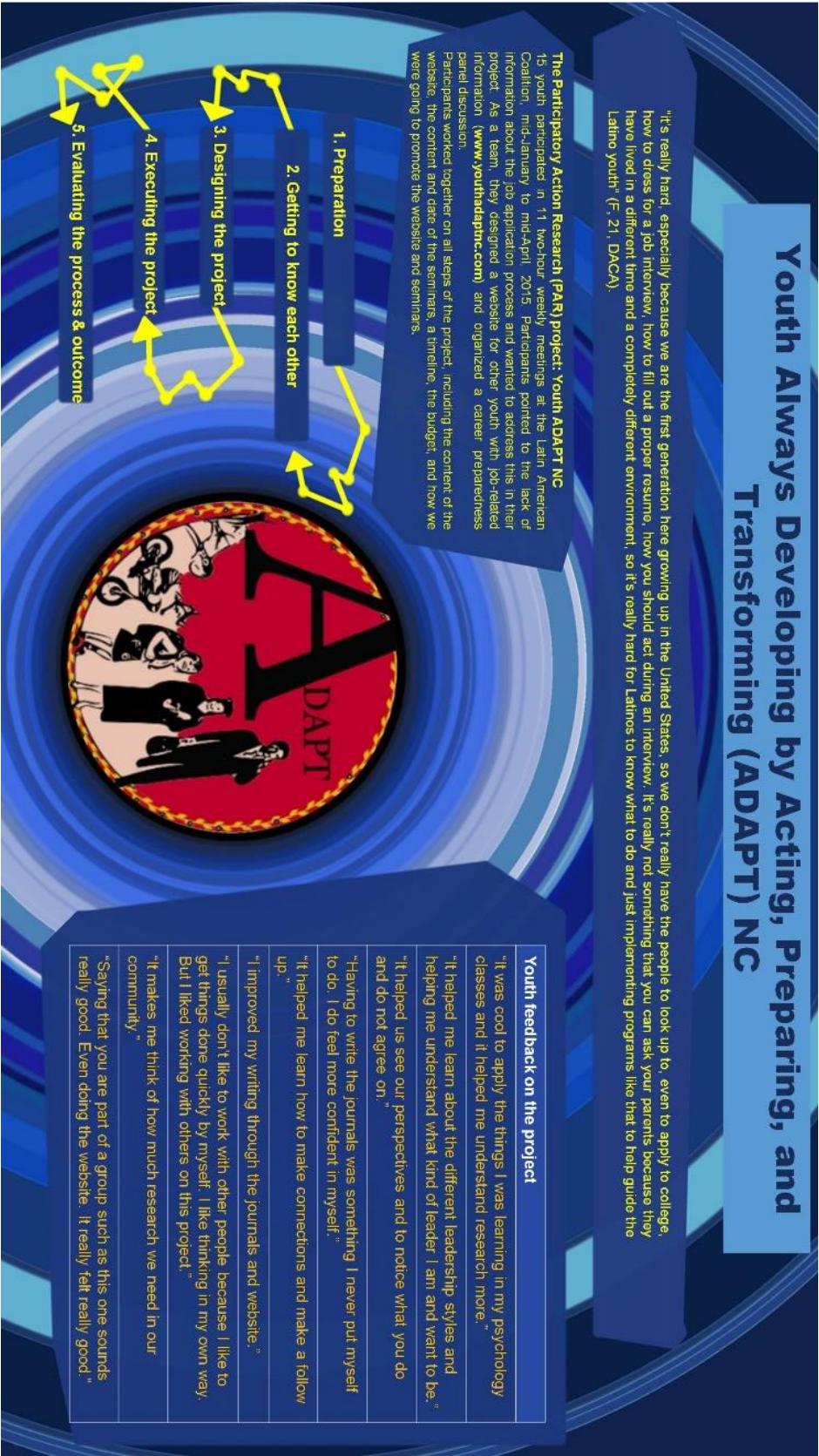
Youth activate their bilingualism and biculturalism to set themselves apart from other candidates and show how they can contribute to the organization. "I got my interview and I asked to speak in Spanish, and then they told me that they needed bilingual, that's how I got a job pretty fast." (F-21, PR).

The main strategy is to seek employment close to home, or sometimes school, so that they can walk to work or, if dependent on a ride, the friend or family member driving, does not have to go far. Those with their own car are more mobile, but are also more likely to take on additional work. "I'm not going to be driving a license yet. My mom doesn't let me drive and if she drives and gets pulled over, she'd get detained. So it's really hard for her to drive me to work." (M-19, DACA).

Participants also expressed spatial preferences about where to work based on personal experiences, stereotypes, discomforts, and statements made by others (e.g., peers, family, media). Several participants are involved with immigrant rights advocacy work to promote immigrant rights and change policy. They also build networks.







# Making change in the “New South”

## How to make change happen

Tactic	Participant quote/explanation
Understand and recognize the issues at stake	"I have heard that the younger people think things are going to get better but if you don't accept that things are happening and if you don't do anything about it then things aren't going to get better" (F, 19, DACA).
One-on-one personal transformations	"once you make that connection, people are more willing and more open to going to things" (F, 19, DACA). "I want to help people understand they can make changes, empower people. Of course I have to help myself first" (M, 21, DACA).
Start reaching people when they are young	Participants overwhelmingly agree that initiatives need to start in elementary school and middle school, because by the time youth reach high school, it is difficult to turn trajectories around: "I start these programs in elementary because a lot of kids, I came small in elementary and even since I came I thought: I'm never gonna get a job here" (M, 16, undocumented).
Strategic argumentation	"start these legislative changes with students first, children first" (M, 21, DACA). Highlighting the contributions of immigrants and Latinos, and how their successes influence all of us.
Peaceful protests and advocacy	"I don't think you can solve things by force or by yelling. I think the best way to solving things is by peace or by understanding the way they think" (M, 16, PR).
Policy change... and beyond	DACA gives short-term access to employment, but it is not a long-term, comprehensive solution, both in terms of its extent (what it covers) and its length (how long it removes barriers). Additional policy change as well as local initiatives are important in enhancing job access.

## How does Charlotte compare to other places?

- > "There have been a lot more opportunities for Latinos in California. Probably because they have a larger population" (F, 16, U visa).
- > "Charlotte, it has a lot of problems as is, but I think some places have it tougher" (F, 17, PR).
- > In "Arizona, I feel there's more racism there. I wouldn't like to be there" (F, 16, DACA).
- > "It's just new, I remember looking at the Latino scholarships and they were all in the West Coast so we do lack some infrastructure. But we can definitely start building something new here. So I don't see it as a positive or a negative, I just see it as new, as different" (M, 21, DACA).
- > "North Carolina, because I have traveled outside of Charlotte a lot, it's not a very good place for Hispanics (...) Huntersville area, which is not even far from Charlotte, is very redneck. Very still old southern, I get people coming into Target that won't even look at my face" (F, 21, DACA).
- > "I like Charlotte, I like it a lot. If I stay in the United States, I'd stay in Charlotte. (...) I find Charlotte more calm and a place where you can triumph, you have more opportunity. It's a place where, later on in life, you'd want to raise a family, and live long" (F, 17, DACA).
- > "Charlotte doesn't have much to offer for me, at this moment. But, at the same time, I've really fallen in love with the diverse community we have here" (F, 19, TPS).

Some may say a new 'type' of Latino identity has emerged:

- > "I'm part of a new immigration wave because I'm different from the West Coast Latinos. I'm different from the Florida Latinos and from the Puerto Ricans in Mexico. So I'm a new category of Latinos" (M, 21, DACA).



